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To

JOHN EMERICH EDWARD, LORD ACTON:

PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Lord Acton,—Four or five years ago you did me the honour of inviting me to undertake a section in the great work which you were then planning. I could not have the pleasure of complying with your request: I was fully occupied with other studies. Of those studies this volume is the result. With your kind permission I dedicate it to you, as a tribute—I wish it were a worthier one—of gratitude for your unwearied readiness to help me in doubts and difficulties, and of admiration for the greatest living master of historical scholarship.

Most sincerely yours,
W. S. LILLY.

Athenæum Club,
May 16, 1901.

SUMMARY.

CHAPTER I.

THE GENESIS OF THE RENAISSANCE.

PAGE

Various accounts of the Renaissance 1

The seventy-four years between 1453 and 1527 its culminating period 3

The Renaissance epoch may be regarded as extending from 1453 to 1789 5

But the roots of a later period are always buried in an earlier, the new idea germinating under the ruins of the old order, as it falls to decay and dissolution 5

Pastor's distinction between a true and a false Renaissance dissented from 6

The all-absorbing devotion to classical antiquity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a development of thoughts, aspirations, traditions existing during the Middle Ages 7

The ascetically Christian idea which lay at the root of the greatness of the Middle Ages, increasingly loses vitality from the beginning of the fourteenth century 10

PAGE

And the reviving influence of classicalism becomes more and more apparent in art and in literature . 13

Petrarch usually regarded as the founder of the literary Renaissance 14

Boccaccio's career of singular value as showing how far the victory of the classical spirit had gone in his time 17

The lay movement in society in the fourteenth century 18

Influence of the Council of Constance on the development of the Renaissance 19

And of the Fall of Constantinople . . . 20

Enthusiasm for everything connected with the antique world at the close of the fifteenth century . 21

Wide divergence of the leading Italian Humanists at that period from the medieval type . . 23

And of the rulers of the Church . . . 25

Heine's view of Rome in that age . . . 27

Object of the next five chapters: to consider some of the more marked characteristics of the Renaissance, as exhibited by five great men who may be taken as Types of it: Michael Angelo, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Luther, and Sir Thomas More . 28

Reasons for selecting them 30

In what spirit the task is approached . . . 33

CHAPTER II.

MICHAEL ANGELO—THE ARTIST.

PAGE

The object of art, an Idea in Plato's sense . . 37

Michael Angelo the supreme exponent of the genius of the Renaissance : its Prophet or seer . . 39

Sources for a knowledge of him . . . 40

Three distinctly marked off periods in his life . . 41

Twenty-five years of discipleship (1474–1500) . . 41

Thirty-five years of artistic maturity (1500–1535) . 65

Twenty-nine years of vigorous old age (1535–1564) . 81

His prime characteristic absolute veracity . . 84

In his verses, as in his sculpture and painting, he seizes the very essence of the thing, and presents it in its living reality 89

His works supreme examples of the arts of design to convey thought 96

He dwelt far above the region of sectarian strife and controversy, and was not a crypto-Lutheran . 96

Nor did he cling to any dream of Platonising Christianity 100

He belonged to "a very well-marked class of souls, namely, those who delight in giving a spiritual, that is, an ethico-intellectual expression to every truth, by exhibiting an ulterior end which is yet legitimate to it" 102

*

CHAPTER III.

ERASMUS—THE MAN OF LETTERS.

PAGE

Vast influence of Erasmus in his time, of which his writings furnish a most vivid image . . 103

Recent Erasmian literature 105

Four well-marked divisions in the life of Erasmus . 110

The first, extending from his birth in 1467 to his visit to England in 1497 or 1498, may be considered the spring of his intellectual life . . . 110

His birth and childhood 111

Becomes, unwillingly, a novice in the house of the Augustinians at Stein in 1485, being then eighteen, and spends there between five and six miserable years 115

Leaves Stein in 1491 to become secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, receiving priest's orders during that time 117

Spends some time in Paris between 1491 and 1497 where he makes the acquaintance of several young Englishmen of noble family, among them William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, at whose invitation he visits England at the end of the last-mentioned year or the beginning of 1498 . . . 117

This visit marks a turning-point in his career, and begins the second period of his life, as we are considering it, his intellectual summer . . 118

Though he had as yet published nothing, he was recognized as a master of his craft, and speedily acquired

PAGE

the friendship of distinguished Englishmen, such as More, Colet, Fisher, and Warham . . 119

His extremely favourable impression of England . 121

Returns to Paris in 1499 122

In 1502 publishes the *Adages*, which wins for him a European reputation 123

In 1502 published the *Enchiridion*, which had an enormous success 124

Devotes the early years of the sixteenth century to the study of Greek, and becomes a master of that tongue 126

Visits England a second time in 1505, lectures on Greek at Cambridge, and is admitted B.D. there . . 129

Goes to Italy in 1506 and remains there for three pleasant and fruitful years, taking the degree of D.D. at Turin 130

Resisting the efforts made to retain him in Rome, returns to England on the accession of Henry VIII., reaching it in July, 1509 . . . 135

This brings to a close the second period of his life : Italy was the school where his intellectual formation was finished ; where his literary talent was matured 137

On arriving in England takes up his abode in More's house, Bucklersbury, and there writes the *Praise of Folly*, published three years later (1512) . 140

Is elected Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1511, and re-elected in 1513 . . . 140

PAGE

Publishes his *Greek Testament* in 1516 . . . 145

His vast intellectual activity at this period . . 147

His greatness and authority go on increasing until at the age of fifty (1519) he exercises a sort of literary dictatorship throughout Europe . . 149

This ends the third period in his life : his intellectual summer. The last period—the winter of his discontent—is darkened by the Lutheran controversy 150

He had sympathised with Luther's condemnation of the traffic in indulgences 151

But he disliked Luther's virulence and excess . . 153

And when Luther broke into open revolt against Rome, he held aloof 155

The religious dogmas which Luther proceeded to construct filled him with dismay : the new Scholasticism seemed to him as bad as or worse than the old . 159

In particular, Luther's denial of free will appeared to him to undermine the foundations of ordered human existence ; and he applies himself to confute it in his treatise *De Libero Arbitrio*, published in 1524 160

Luther replies with violent vituperation in his treatise *De Servo Arbitrio* 160

In 1524 publishes his *Colloquies*, which obtain enormous popularity 161

Twelve more years of life remain to him : years of unwearied work, of almost uninterrupted physical suffering, and ever-increasing sadness as the Lutheran Revolution progresses . . . 162

PAGE

In 1533 publishes his tractate *De Amabili Ecclesiæ Concordia*, a plea for the reconciliation of ecclesiastical unity with rational liberty . . . 165

Declines the Cardinalate offered him by Paul III. in 1534 167

Died at Basle on July 12, 1536 169

His great work—to make the Renaissance the instrument of liberal culture for the civilized world. 169

But liberal culture must have a philosophical basis: liberty dwells with right reason . . . 172

Erasmus, more than any one else in the sixteenth century, vindicates the essential and inalienable prerogatives of human reason: the starting-point of his philosophy, his moral philosophy, which guided and informed his intellectual activity, is reason speaking through conscience . . 172

CHAPTER IV.

REUCHLIN—THE SAVANT.

Authorities for Reuchlin's life 177

His birth (1455) and early years . . . 178

Somewhere about his twentieth year he is appointed travelling tutor to the third son of the reigning Margrave of Baden-Durlach, with whom he visits Paris, remaining there for rather more than a year 179

PAGE

There he studies under Johannes a Lapide, whom he follows in 1474 to Basle, where he obtains instruction in Greek from Andronikus Contoblakas . 180

Now begins his career of authorship by publishing his *Vocabularius Breviloquus* . . . 180

In 1477 returns to Paris and vigorously prosecutes his Hellenic studies under George Hermonymus of Sparta 181

Goes back to Germany in 1481 and is appointed secretary or interpreter to Eberhard the Bearded, Count of Würtemberg, whom he accompanies to Italy 182

In 1483 is chosen by the Dominican Order as their Proctor for the whole of Germany . . 183

In 1492 goes to Italy with Ludwig, an illegitimate son of Count Eberhard, remains there a year, and makes the acquaintance of Pico della Mirandola . 184

Shortly after his return goes to Linz as Count Eberhard's envoy to the Emperor Frederick, from whom he receives signal marks of favour: studies Hebrew there under Jacob ben Jehiel Loans . 185

In 1494 publishes the *De Verbo Mirifico* . . 186

Betakes himself to Heidelberg on the death of Eberhard the Bearded, and finds there a friend and protector in John von Dalberg, Bishop of Worms, and is appointed a Privy Councillor for one year of the Elector Palatine Philip 187

Visits Italy for a third time in 1498, on business of the Elector Palatine, but returns to Würtemberg at the end of that year 188

PAGE

Is appointed Judge Ordinary to the Swabian Confederation in 1502 188

Publishes his *Rudimenta Hebraica* in 1506 . . 189

In 1509 becomes involved in a controversy with John Pfefferkorn, a converted Jew, who advocates the confiscation and destruction of all Hebrew literature 193

The controversy assumes vast proportions, the Dominicans having taken Pfefferkorn under their protection 201

In 1513 resigns all his offices 204

In the same year appeals to Rome against the proceedings of Hochstraten, the Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity 204

The sympathies of the leading Humanists throughout Europe, who had long regarded him as their leader and head, gather round him . . . 205

In 1514 publishes a collection of their letters to him under the title of *Clarorum Virorum epistolæ ad Joh. Reuchlin* 208

In 1515 the first collection of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* appears 209

In 1517 publishes his treatise *De Arte Cabbalistica* . 213

On the 20th of June, 1520, the definitive papal sentence is promulgated enjoining silence on Reuchlin and condemning him in costs 215

Reuchlin, though believing it wrong, loyally accepts it. 217

He remains unmolested till his death (June 30, 1522) occupied with his favourite studies . . 217

PAGE

Reuchlin's greatness lies in this—that he was the pioneer of a new method: the first of the *savants* of the modern world, and in some sense the father of them, though his Cabbalistic studies are intrinsically valueless 220

He vindicated the independence of the scientific method, and directed the thoughts of men to that study of Eastern languages and literature which it had been reserved for our own age adequately to pursue 228

The victory which he won—in apparent defeat—was a victory for all time: a conquest of light for liberty 230

CHAPTER V.

LUTHER—THE REVOLUTIONIST.

Vast extent of the literature concerning Luther, and small value of most of it 231

His origin and childhood 233

Luther at the University of Erfurt in 1501. His studies there 235

Presents himself as a postulant at the gate of the Augustinian Convent in that city on the 17th of July, 1505 236

Is a pious monk. His interior trials 237

Gradually makes his way to the doctrine of justification by faith alone 241

PAGE

Is ordained priest in 1507, and is appointed in the next year Professor of Philosophy at Wittenberg 244

In 1509 is appointed Court preacher there and becomes famous for his sermons 244

Visits Rome on business of his Order in 1512 : what he sees and hears there plants in him the seeds of future rebellion 244

Takes the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1512 . 245

Is appointed District Visitor of his Order for Meissen and Thuringen in 1515 245

Comes upon a portion of the *Theologia Germanica* in 1516 246

In 1517 all seems to promise him a brilliant future in the service of the Church : but all is changed by Tetzel's preaching of the Indulgence . . 247

His sermon on Indulgences on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 1516 249

What the Roman doctrine of Indulgences really is . 249

What the doctrine became in the hands of pardoners . 253

The appointment of Archbishop Albert of Maintz as a Papal Commissary for the preaching of Leo X.'s pardon (1515) 256

The preaching of Sub-Commissary Tetzel . . 258

The spirit of Luther deeply stirred by the startling statements attributed to Tetzel. On the 31st of October, 1517, he affixes to the door of the University Church of Wittenberg his ninety-five theses 260

Popular misapprehension of his object in so doing. He merely desired a full discussion of the subject

PAGE

of Papal pardons, principally for the sake of clearing his own mind 260

Writes on the same day to Archbishop Albert recounting the stories current concerning Tetzel's preaching, and begging the intervention of that Prelate, who returns no answer . . . 261

Moderation of Luther's ninety-five theses. Certainty that neither he nor the ecclesiastical authorities had any presentiment of the work he was beginning 263

Gradual transformation of Luther "from a harmless necessary reformer into a needless and noxious rebel" 263

In May, 1520, republishes the *Epitome of Prierias* with a commentary of his own, in which he openly revolts against Rome. This the real "turning-point of the Reformation" 270

In July, 1520, publishes his Letter to the German Nobility, in which he expressly rejects the hierarchical conception whereon the Catholic Church is based, and asserts the subordination of religion to the civil power 273

In October, 1520, publishes his treatise *On the Babylonish Captivity of the Church*, in which he reduces the seven Sacraments to three, and denies the Sacrifice of the Mass 274

On the 10th of December, 1520, ceremonially burns Leo X.'s Bull *Exsurge Domine* before the Elster Gate at Wittenberg 274

On the 16th of April, 1521, appears before the Diet at Worms and, declining to recant, is proscribed by an Imperial Edict as a heretic . . . 275

PAGE

Hides at Wartburg till March, 1522, when he returns to Wittenberg, and carries on his religious revolution 277

The issue of the Peasants' War (1525) disastrous to his popularity with the multitude . . . 279

And such hold over the educated classes as he possessed, shattered by his controversy with Erasmus on free will (1524–5) 279

A third and more crushing blow to his authority given by his marriage with an ex-nun (1525) . . 280

From the year 1525 his personal authority suffers an eclipse, and the control of the revolution initiated by him passes into the hands of princes, who make use of it to possess themselves of ecclesiastical property and ecclesiastical prerogatives . . 281

The decree of the Diet of Speyer (1526) practically sets the seal to it, and recognizes the division of Germany into Catholic and Protestant . . 281

Causes that led to the success of Luther's revolution. First: the intolerable abuses in the Catholic Church 283

Secondly: the intellectual condition of the time and, specially, the decadence of the ideal of life and society which had dominated the Middle Ages . 288

Thirdly: the growth of a spirit of nationality throughout Europe 290

Fourthly: the character and endowments of the man himself, whose great qualities and great defects served him equally well 291

The most important results of Luther's Revolution. First: the Protestant Reformation and all that

PAGE

came of it. The doctrine of "saving faith" invented by him, and termed by him "The Gospel," still the essence of what may be called "orthodox" Protestantism, as opposed to its rationalistic developments: while the French Revolutionists merely applied in the sphere of politics, the principle of individualism which he laid down in the sphere of religion 298

Secondly: The reform of the Catholic Church wrought by the Council of Trent and the quickening of Catholic theology and philosophy into new life . 300

Nothing can be further from the truth than to regard Luther, personally, as a champion of liberty, a prophet of toleration, an apostle of freedom of conscience 302

The immediate effect of his revolution as disastrous to spiritual freedom as to intellectual cultivation . 304

But principles are stronger than men, and often produce results most alien from the intention of those who employ them. The great teachers of the *Aufklärung*, who overthrew the Protestant scholasticism established by Luther, were in some sense an outcome of him: and so we may truly confess a debt to him in respect of the freedom from the fetters of spiritual narrowness characteristic of this new age 307

CHAPTER VI.

MORE—THE SAINT.

Thomas More, a true child of his age, feeling deeply its new aspirations, assimilating its highest culture, rejoicing in its fuller life 309

PAGE

But his whole being penetrated by truths which are not of an age but for all time : the representative of the highest perfection of character discernible among the men of the Renaissance . 309

Great men are of their age ; they would not be great men else : but they are not wholly fashioned by circumstances ; their greatness largely lies in this, that they are not 311

They are subject, indeed, to the laws of time and matter, but not wholly subject : their thoughts, energy, actions, suffering, work wonders beyond time and matter and the effects of mechanical force 311

Ideas are forces too : forces not subject to the law of physical necessity. Man belongs not only to the kingdom of necessity, but to the kingdom of liberty, where the rational will knows that its law is an ideal law, which in determining its action, metaphysically, leaves to it its own spontaneity . 311

These considerations not out of place in surveying the life of More 312

Old and new biographies of him . . . 313

Born in 1478, in the year of the attainder of the Duke of Clarence by a Parliament exhibiting that complete subserviency to the royal will through which English liberty suffered an eclipse for a century : a period of all-absorbing, unrestrained despotism . 316

His parentage and education 320

Entered in 1492 at Canterbury Hall, Oxford. Details of his life there 321

Entered in 1494 at New Inn, and two years later at Lincoln's Inn 323

PAGE

Has already a considerable reputation for scholarship . 324

Makes acquaintance with Erasmus in 1498 . . 324

Has a purpose to be a priest, but finds he has no vocation 325

Marries his first wife about 1505 326

Incurs the displeasure of Henry VII. towards the end of the reign of that prince and withdraws to France 327

Returns to England on the demise of Henry VII. and celebrates the accession and first marriage of Henry VIII. in a *Carmen Gratulatorium* . . 327

Publishes his *Life of Pico della Mirandola* in 1510, and in the same year is made Under-Sheriff of London 329

Loses his first wife and marries Alice Middleton, 1511 . 329

On Embassy in Flanders, 1514–1516 . . . 330

Publishes his *Utopia*, 1516 330

On Embassy at Calais, 1517 331

Sworn of the Privy Council, and made Master of Requests, 1518, being then forty years of age . 332

Description of him by Erasmus. 332

Made Under-Treasurer of the kingdom and knighted, 1521 335

Elected Speaker of the House of Commons, 1523 . 335

Takes up his abode in the house purchased by him at Chelsea, 1523 336

The affair of the Divorce begins to be mooted, 1524 or 1525 337

PAGE

Is made Lord Chancellor 1529 342

Resigns the Great Seal on the 16th of May, 1532, upon the passing of the Act against Annates . . 346

His daily life 347

Cranmer, newly consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury, determines Henry's matrimonial cause in the King's favour on the 23rd of May, 1533, and five days after affirms the legality of his marriage with Anne Boleyn 349

Anne Boleyn crowned on the 23rd of June, 1533, More declining to be present 349

On the 11th of July, 1533, Clement VII. annuls Cranmer's proceedings in Henry's matrimonial cause 350

And on the 23rd of March, 1534, gives definitive sentence against the King 350

Futile attempts to intimidate More into approval of the King's Divorce 338

He declines to swear to the Oath drawn up under, or rather beyond the scope of, the Act of Succession (1534) 354

He is sent to the Tower to undergo perpetual imprisonment 357

While confined there, for more than a year, composes the *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, and other works 357

His judicial murder on the 6th of July, 1535 . . 362

Great value of his English works 366

PAGE

His *Utopia* 367

His life no ordinary manifestation of the triumph of ideal forces over material, of right over might, of the freedom of the rational will to follow its transcendental law 377

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESULTS OF THE RENAISSANCE.

We owe to the Renaissance the enlargement of our mental horizon by a re-awakened interest in the sources of our moral and intellectual life: we owe to it a true appreciation of the unity of Western civilization: it was a resurrection not merely of the classical spirit, but of Christian antiquity; and, in a sense, we may date from it the re-birth of the physical sciences . . 379

But we cannot directly attribute to it the liberation of the conscience in religion, or the establishment of the principle of political freedom, although there were elements latent in it which, in the far-off event, contributed thereto 382

Its direct result was to re-introduce into Europe the Cæsarism of the antique world: that was its political idea 385

Possibly this discipline of absolutism may have been necessary for the realization of an ampler state of liberty, just as the ascetic discipline of the Middle Ages may have been necessary for the wider culture of the Renaissance . . . 392

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RENAISSANCE TYPES.

CHAPTER I.

THE GENESIS OF THE RENAISSANCE.

I.

"The charming word 'Renaissance,'" writes Michelet, in his charming way, "recalls to the lovers of the beautiful merely the advent of a new art, and the unfettered flight of the fancy. For the scholar it means the renovation of the studies of antiquity; for legists the dawn of light upon the discordant chaos of our old customs. But is that all?" And he decides that it is by no means all. "The sixteenth century," he tells us, "if we take the phrase in a large sense, as we legitimately may, extends from Columbus to Copernicus, from the discovery of the earth to the discovery of the heavens: nay, it includes man's re-discovery of himself."* Pater under-

* *Histoire de France*, vol. vii., int., p. 1.

stood by the word Renaissance "a general stimulus and enlightening of the human mind," an "outbreak of the human spirit," the qualities of which were "the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the Middle Ages imposed upon the heart and the imagination."* All which Symonds held, and more also. He tells us that what the word Renaissance really means is "a new birth to liberty—the spirit of mankind recovering consciousness and the power of self-determination, recognizing the beauty of the outer world and of the body through art, liberating the reason in science and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence, and establishing the principle of political freedom."† It should be observed that Symonds regarded the Protestant Reformation as being a phase of this great movement, and here I think he is undoubtedly right. Once more Freeman, discoursing before the University of Cambridge of the *Unity of History*, says: "The revival of learning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries marks, as is agreed on all hands, one of the great epochs in the history of the mind of man. . . . That age was an age when the spirit of man cast away trammels by which it

* *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, pref., p. xi.

† *Renaissance in Italy: Age of the Despots*, p. 30. So at page 13 we read: "The Renaissance was the liberation of humanity from a dungeon."

had long been fettered; it was an age when men opened their eyes to light, against which they had been closed for ages. . . . That revival of learning which brought the men of our modern world face to face with the camp before Ilios, and with the agorê of Athens, was indeed a revolution which amounted to hardly less than a second rebirth of the human mind."* Finally—not to multiply these citations unduly—Gregorovius writes, more soberly, "The revival of learning was the first great act of that immense moral transformation in which Europe was involved, and whose marked epochs are the Italian Renaissance, the German Reformation and the French Revolution."†

Such, according to these five considerable writers, of different schools, was that great movement which we call the Renaissance. Here I merely exhibit their views, which, in the last chapter, I shall, to some extent, examine. I go on to observe that we may agree with Symonds when he says, "Two dates 1453 and 1527, marking, respectively, the fall of Constantinople and the sack of Rome, are convenient for fixing in the mind that narrow space of time during which the Renaissance culminated."‡ They were indeed seventy-four memorable years: years of intellectual

* *Comparative Politics*, p. 296.

† *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter*, vol. vii. p. 499.

‡ *Age of Despots*, pref., p. 1.

and social awakening, of mental and spiritual unrest; of chaotic opposition between old and new, between self-denial and self-enjoyment, between ecclesiasticism and secularism, between religiosity and sensuousness. I have elsewhere used the phrase, "the successive avatars, the endless metempsychoses of the Renaissance." And it appears to me that the first step towards forming in the mind any true image of it is to realise how many are its currents, how marked are its contrasts, how fertile it is in anachronisms and antinomies. Again, really to understand it, we must ascend the stream of time and obtain some knowledge of it in its sources. Chronology is one of the great difficulties of the historian as distinguished from the annalist. It is easy to assign dates for specific facts. It is exceedingly hard to give them for those vast and complex movements of the human mind, which, with the great religious, intellectual and social phenomena produced by them, are alone worthy of serious study in the records of the past.

Still, chronological divisions are necessary. And there would seem to be no sufficient reason for rejecting those which custom has rendered familiar to us in European history. It is generally correct to speak of the first eight hundred years of our era as the period of the formation of Christendom. The coronation of Charles the Great on Christmas Day, 800, may be regarded as the ceremonial ini-

tiation of the Middle Ages. The taking of Constantinople by Mohammed II., in 1453, marks their close. The well-nigh three and a half centuries extending thence to the French Revolution of 1789 may fitly be styled the Renaissance epoch. Thus we are brought to the New Age, in which our lot is cast. But it must never be forgotten that in every case the roots of the later period are buried in the earlier. The new idea germinates under the ruins of the old order as it falls to decay and dissolution. In this sense, too, the Homeric comparison between the generations of men and the generations of the leaves, holds good. The world of green furnishes an apt emblem of the life in death which we find in the world of ideas. But further, ideas, like the productions of the vegetable kingdom, are subject in their growth and in their decline to the influence of local and other accidents, sometimes exceedingly difficult to trace. In the happy soil of "some irriguous valley," they mature more quickly, flourish more luxuriantly, and die sooner than in a land where nature's gifts are less profusely bestowed. Everywhere they obey the same laws; but in the time, the manner, and the measure of their development there are innumerable differences, because in those laws there is diversity of operation.

The subject which I wish specially to consider in this chapter is the Genesis of the Renaissance. But before I go on to do that, I should like to

say a word of dissent from the position taken by a very learned writer with regard to the movement. I mean Dr. Pastor, who, in his well-known work* —to which all serious students of history are so much indebted—endeavours to separate the Renaissance into two movements: one Christian, the other Pagan, or, as he more frequently expresses it, the one true and the other false. *Pace tanti viri*, the attempt appears to me eminently unsuccessful. Dr. Pastor's line of division is purely arbitrary and imaginary. No doubt some Humanists were more, some less, Christian. But, as the phrase is, they agreed to differ, and whatever their theological or non-theological predilections might be, they met on terms of fraternal amity. Pastor himself admits, "The strongly ascetic Albergati gladly held constant intercourse with half heathen, brilliantly endowed wits; and the pious Capranica was delighted with the letters of Poggio, and addressed him as 'very dear comrade:'"† Poggio, who, surpassed by few in contempt for Christian faith, and in defiance of Christian morality, held the office of Apostolic Secretary and other lucrative places under eight successive Popes. And, unquestionably, Humanists of the type of Poggio dominated the Papal Court in the culminating period of the Renaissance; nor, apparently, was their presence there thought in-

* *Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters.*

† Vol. i. p. 232.

congruous. Probably the Pontiffs could not help themselves, even if they had wished to do so—of which there is no evidence: the spirit of the age may have been too strong for them. But when Dr. Pastor infers from the countenance given by them to Humanists that there *must* have been a distinctively Christian Renaissance which the Church patronized and protected,* we can only regret that his ratiocination is not on the same level with his erudition.

II.

So much, in passing, as to the monumental work of this illustrious scholar: enough, perhaps, to indicate the reserves with which it should be read. And now let us proceed to the immediate subject of the present chapter, the Genesis of the Renaissance. The life of a nation, the life of humanity, like the life of a man, does not consist of a succession of mere circumstances: its incidents are causally bound together: its present is the outcome of its past. The all-absorbing devotion to classical antiquity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was merely a development, singularly fostered by the conditions of those times, of traditions, thoughts, aspirations existing throughout the Middle Ages. Latin, the language of the Western Church, was during all that tract of years

* See especially a curious page (45) in his Introduction.

the language of culture among her children. Such association with ancient Rome as is implied in the use of that language, the European peoples received with Christianity: and it was something considerable. Hence certain scholars have been led to speak, not inaptly, of the time of Charles the Great as the period of the First Renaissance. But more: the intellectual life of medieval Europe was also nourished—and ever increasingly—from Greek sources: from Hellenic philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, physicians. It is true that the Latin translations in which these authors were read were of no great accuracy; still they were sufficient to convey a fairly correct notion of the originals.

Such was the influence during the Middle Ages of classical antiquity upon Europe generally. In Italy it was far more direct and far more operative, though it did not depend upon literature. The people of that country never forgot the glories of imperial Rome; nay, they claimed them as part of their own past: and not the least of its glories were those radiated from its mythology. The victory of Christianity over Paganism in Italy was superficial. Great Saints, great Doctors, great Popes arose in that country. But Christianity never so thoroughly penetrated the masses, and the common life, as it did in regions which it won from barbarism. It is not too much to say that Italy was the least distinctively Christian part of Christendom. The old deities

were never quite superseded there; a popular cultus was still paid to them. "Conquered Paganism," writes Ozanam, "transformed itself. Instead of a worship it became a superstition. But even under this form it preserved what was its essence (*son fond*) the power of misleading men by terror and by pleasure. The converted people consented to hold their gods as demons on condition of fearing them, of invoking them, of attaching a secret virtue to their images. This antiquity, so full of life (*cette vivace antiquité*) appears in all the centuries—yes, even in the centuries which are the most chaste, the most severe, the furthest removed from the taste of the ancients. Mythology is Paganism perpetuating itself in literature, just as in religion it perpetuates itself in superstition, and in law by the oppression of the weak through slavery and divorce. Dante has been reproached for the mythology of his Inferno. But Dante followed the spirit, the taste, the pre-occupations of the men of his time. So far from being pedantic in this respect, he is popular. He obeys a people which still believes in all these things: in the secret virtue hidden in the statue of Mars, in the geese of the Capitol, in the *ancilia*. The ancient gods have merely changed form. They have become demons, fallen angels, but they are always there; and the poet mentions them because he believes in them. The Middle Ages are full of the remains of Paganism." *

* *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. i. pp 237–24.

And as those ages were running towards their close, these remains of Paganism exhibit ever more and more vitality, until, as in the prophet's vision, the dry bones come together, bone to his bone, and the sinews and flesh come upon them, and the skin covers them above, and breath comes from the four winds and breathes upon them, and they live—an exceeding great army. The culminating period of the Middle Ages in Italy we must place in the thirteenth century: the period of the Communes, of the Lombard League, of the building of the great cathedrals: the period which gave to the Papacy Innocent III., to Christianity St. Francis of Assisi, to philosophy St. Thomas Aquinas, to poetry Dante, to art Giotto. Ideas are like flowers: they grow, they bloom, and they fade. This efflorescence of the idea which lay at the root of the greatness of the Middle Ages, was the precursor of its decay. From the beginning of the fourteenth century its loss of vitality is clearly and increasingly manifested in every department of human life.

We must remember that Christianity manifested itself to the decadent and moribund civilization of the Roman Empire, specially, as an ascetic discipline: a doctrine of abstinence not only from the things which it branded as positively sinful, but from things in themselves licit. The world, which St. John exhorts his disciples not to love, because the love of it is incompatible with the love

of the Father, which he describes as lying in the wicked one, which, over and over again, in the New Testament, the disciples of Christ are bidden to forsake and overcome, and which—such is the vitality of phrases—stands, even in our own day, for the complete antithesis of the Church, is the present visible frame of things, doomed, as those early preachers believed, soon to pass away with the lust thereof: the flesh in which St. Paul declared no good thing to dwell, which it was his daily endeavour to keep under and bring into subjection, is the whole of man's lower or animal nature. Christianity is, of course, more than this. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge enshrined in it are not summed up in the doctrine that the spirit should triumph over the flesh. It has been said that "Christianity varies according to the nature on which it falls." The saying, though hardly worthy of the admiration often bestowed upon it, indicates a truth. Christianity is received —to quote the words of Aquinas—according to the capacity of the recipient: "*secundum modum recipientis*": and, as an universal religion, guarding the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, it professes to bring to all who receive it the spiritual remedies specially needed by them. Now, unquestionably, its severity and restraint were specially needed "to cleanse the foul body of the infected world" into which it was cast. And so St. Augustine, on whose theology and meta-

physics the Middle Ages lived, declared its chief lessons for man to be continence and patience. "There are two things," he says, "which are prescribed to us in this life—things of exceeding difficulty—to refrain and to endure. For we are commanded to refrain from those things which the world calls good, and to endure the world's abounding evils. This is continence: that patience. Two virtues they are which cleanse the soul and make it capable of the Divine nature. To bridle lusts and to conquer pleasures, that false blandishments may not seduce us, or what is accounted prosperity enervate us, we have need of continence, so that we may give no credence to earthly felicity, and to the end seek that felicity which has no end. And as it is the office of continence to keep us from giving credence to worldly felicity, so it is the office of patience not to keep us from giving way to the world's infelicity." *

* *Ser.* 38 init. I am tempted to subjoin the original, as no translation can do justice to it:—"Duo sunt, quae in hac vita veluti laboriosa nobis praecipiuntur, continere et sustinere. Jubemur enim continere ab his quae in hoc mundo dicuntur bona, et sustinere ea quae in hoc mundo abundant mala. Illa continentia, ista sustinentia vocatur. Duae virtutes quae mundant animam, et capacem faciunt divinitatis. In frenandis libidinibus et coërcendis voluptatibus, ne seducat quod male blanditur, et enervet quod prosperum dicitur, continentia nobis opus est: non credere felicitati terrenae, et usque ad finem quaerere felicitatem, quae non habet finem. Ut autem est continentia, felicitati mundi non credere, ita sustinentiae est, infelicitati mundi non cedere."

Now, this note of asceticism is strongly impressed upon the art and literature of the earlier Middle Ages. The beauty of the old Italian masterpieces is purely spiritual. The painters originally sought to convey the stern teaching which I have just quoted, when they pictured the heroes of religion who had been faithful unto death, and had obtained a crown of life. And it is easy to understand how Heine, viewing the matter with quite other eyes than theirs, should have judged that when you look at a collection of these early masterpieces, and see nothing but sanguinary scenes—scourgings and slaughter—you might suppose them to have been painted for the picture gallery of an executioner. It is in the domain of art that the influence of classicalism becomes first apparent. And as the devotion to antiquity increases, earthly comeliness increasingly appears. Giotto founded a school which, ever more and more departing from the austere Byzantine tradition of the Madonna followed by his master Cimabue, seeks to depict in earthly wise the beauty ascribed by the Church to her: "tota pulchra es Maria." The generations of Filippino Lippi, of Perugino, of Botticelli, of Signorelli, surrender themselves freely to the renascent classicalism, as to the breath of spring, and portray without scruple the fascinating nudity of Venus, of the Nymphs, the Graces. I need not dwell upon what is so

familiar, or point out how the growth of classical influence is traceable in Italian sculpture from the time of Niccola Pisano. Nor is it necessary for me to do more than touch upon the manifestation of the same spirit in literature. The great theological and philosophical writers of the Middle Ages were logicians, not rhetoricians: their minds were set upon the thing to be said much more than upon the manner of saying it.* Before the fourteenth century had much advanced, authors bestowed at least quite as much attention upon manner as upon matter. It is usual to regard Petrarch as the founder of the literary Renaissance:† "the ancestor of the Humanists," a scholarly French writer calls him: "the first in date and the first in genius." "He professes," M. Monnier continues, "a cult for antiquity which resembles fanaticism. He takes refuge in it as in a temple. He converses with the ancients as with his own familiar friends. He lives not with the living, but with the dead. . . . His

* This has been pithily expressed by Paulsen: "Es kann kaum Schriften geben, die weniger auf das Wie, ausschliesslicher auf das Was des Gesagten selbst gerichtet wären und die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers richteten." *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterricht auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart.* Vol. i. p. 41.

† So Julius Cæsar Scaliger, "Primus quod equidem sciam Petrarcha ex lutulenta barbarie os coelo attolere ausus est." Poet. L. vi. p. 769.

library of the antique masterpieces is unique. Cicero is his father; Virgil his breviary, his confidant, and his friend. He can see, think, conceive only through the medium of antiquity. . . . The scholastic learning of the Middle Ages fills him with sovereign contempt. He openly declares war upon the jurists, the doctors, the astrologers, the grammarians, the theologians . . . all his life is a protestation against them." * "Three things," Paulsen writes, "attracted Petrarch in antiquity: wisdom, virtue, and eloquence. The last he doubtless attained to. Of wisdom and virtue he could discourse delightfully; but they got no further than his speech: however desirable they seemed to him, they did not enter into his life. He praised solitude, he wrote on *The Contempt of the World*. . . . And he lived at the Court of Avignon, always intent, by all possible means, to add to his rich benefices. . . . As ethical preacher and prophet, he reproved the clergy for their luxury and incontinence: a priest himself, he had concubines and children for whom he was ever hunting new preferments." † Here, too, he is the prototype of the Humanists of the next century.

* *Le Quattrocento*, par Philippe Monnier, p. 133.

† *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterricht, &c.*, vol. i. p. 53. But Paulsen is wrong in speaking of Petrarch as a priest: he was only in minor orders.

Such was Petrarch: the bold assailant of the old medieval tradition, the bold champion of the reviving classicalism. A century earlier his boldness would have cost him dear. But the things which he combated had largely lost their hold upon the general mind, and even upon the ecclesiastical. No word of disapproval reached him. On the contrary, the highest in the Church, as in the State, admired him and desired his society. Clement VI., whose time, as Landor observes, was "divided between literature and the ladies, not quite impartially," sought his services as Apostolic Secretary. On five occasions was this important position offered him. He declined it, not caring for the trammels of office. His refusal did not lose him the favour of his Papal patrons, nor was it affected even by his friendship with Rienzi, that "tragic actor in the tattered purple of antiquity," the significance of whose career as a sign of the times is very great. Still greater, however, is the significance of the place which Petrarch occupied in his day and generation. Landor does not exaggerate in saying, "There is no record of any literary man, or, perhaps, of any man whatsoever, to whom such honours—honours of so many kinds, and from so many quarters—have been offered."

The only other really great Italian name in the literary Renaissance is Boccaccio, a greater name, indeed, than Petrarch's. Historically considered,

Boccaccio's career is of singular value as showing how far the victory of the classical spirit had gone. His whole attitude is as far removed as is well conceivable from the medieval tone and temper of thought. Pastor writes: "It is simply shocking how this highly gifted master of form and character-drawing despises all Christian discipline (*Zucht*) and decency. His writings transport the reader to the sweltering atmosphere of Pagan sensuality." * But he was not on that account less acceptable to the rulers of the Church. On the contrary, he was high in the favour of all the Popes, from Benedict XII. to Gregory XI. In truth, as the Church is always in the world, so is the world always in the Church, more or less. And in this age it was more, not less. The greatest ecclesiastics were carried away by the renascent classicalism; and no wonder: for the opposite doctrines and principles, of which they were the accredited representatives, seemed to have lost vivifying influence. "Since the beginning of the fourteenth century," writes Pastor, "corruption and torpor in the life of the Church were manifested by the weakening of the Papal authority, by the worldliness of the clergy, by the downfall of scholastic philosophy and theology, and by the terrible confusion of political and civil life." † And as the Church became secularized, it was natural that

* Vol. i. p. 4. † *Ibid.* p. 11.

the intellectual domain should cease to be a province of the ecclesiastical. Most interesting, too, is it to note how, as a lay movement makes itself ever more and more felt in society, the interests of trade and commerce assume new and increasing importance. And very significant is it of the contrary currents of thought which traverse the epoch, that the rise of the modern tongues of Europe into completer symmetry and ampler form, coincides with the quickened renascent interest in the thought and lore of the antique world. In the fourteenth century the *langue d'oïl* definitely gives way to modern French, of which the first great monument is Froissart's *Chronicles:* our English language assumes the shape in which Chaucer used it for his *Canterbury Tales:* and Italy learnt from Petrarch and Boccaccio the richness and beauty of her vernacular speech. The medieval Church with her "holy Latin tongue" had ceased to be the universal instrument of culture.

III.

The fourteenth century—indeed, we may say the fifteenth also—is not a period in which the ecclesiastical historian can find much satisfaction. The Babylonish Captivity, the Great Schism, the three Councils of Pisa, Constance and Basle, are not delightful topics for him: nor will he discover

much matter for jubilation in the succession of Roman Pontiffs from Martin V. to Alexander VI. I do not know who has more tersely and truly summed up that period than Freeman. "The Papacy," he writes, "sinks through three successive stages of degradation. The Babylonish captivity of Avignon removed the Roman Pontiff from his native seat, and converted the vicegerent of Christ into the despised hireling of a French master. The Great Schism exhibited to the world the spectacle of a spiritual sovereignty, contested, like a temporal throne, between selfish and worthless disputants. At last the gap is healed, and Rome again receives her Pontiffs: but she receives them only to exhibit the successors of Hildebrand and Innocent in the character of worldly and profligate Italian princes, bent only on the aggrandisement of their families, or at best on establishing the pettiest temporal claims of the Holy See." *

From the point of view from which I am writing, there are two specially notable events in the history of the fifteenth century. The first is the Council of Constance (1414–1418). Anything less edifying than its proceedings cannot easily be conceived. Reform, for which, as a contemporary writer puts it, the very stones were crying out, in all Christendom, was of course upon the lips of Fathers assembled in that sacred Synod: but it was far

* *Oxford Essays*, 1857, p. 149.

from their hearts, which were entirely occupied with their own interests. The only practical measures on which they could agree were the burning of Hus and Jerome of Prague—real reformers, however fantastic their speculative opinions; the election of Martin V.; and a number of decrees chiefly intended to limit that Pontiff's power, and speedily made void by him. But in the development of the Renaissance the Council played a very important part. From it dates the dawn of the movement north of the Alps. It kindled everywhere a zeal for the discovery of manuscripts. It brought scholars of different countries face to face, and made the movement European.

Even more important, in the history of the Renaissance, was the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. There are few events in the annals of the world which were accompanied by such wide and deep-spread consternation. Everywhere throughout Christendom, as the news of this great catastrophe flew on the wings of rumour, men's hearts failed them for fear, and for looking after those things which were coming upon the earth. It seemed to them that the centre of political gravity was gone: that the bulwark of European civilization against Asiatic barbarism had been swept away. It is possible—nay, it is certain—that they overrated the greatness of the calamity. But they were right in thinking that it announced

the conclusion of one epoch in the world's history and the beginning of another. It marked the end of the Middle Ages, and the definite establishment of the new order of feelings, aspirations, ideas, culture, which we associate with the word Renaissance. Nor were its immediate effects upon that movement slight. In Petrarch's time, as we learn from one of his letters—to be precise, the date is 1360—there were only eight men in Italy acquainted with the Hellenic tongue, of whom three were found in Florence, and none in Rome. Their number rapidly increased, and the work done by such teachers as Pilatus and Chrysoloras, Argyropulus, and Chalcondyles before the Byzantine catastrophe was considerable. But the learned Greeks who fled from the triumphant infidel, did much to diffuse more widely, first in Italy, and then in other European countries, such culture as they themselves possessed. They gave a great impetus to the study of their language, and before the fifteenth century had closed, some knowledge of it was considered an essential qualification of a scholar.

It is not easy to picture to oneself the ardour with which men threw themselves upon the study of the Greek and Latin classics at that time, especially in Italy, which was the chief home of the "new learning," or the effect of it upon their thoughts and lives. Pastor truly observes, "An enthusiasm for everything connected with

the antique world was carried to so fatal an excess, that the forms of antiquity alone were held to be beautiful, and its ideas to be true. Men looked upon ancient literature as sufficient to satisfy every spiritual need, and as alone capable of guiding them to the true perfection of their nature; and so they sought to resuscitate the life of antiquity as a whole—the decadent antiquity of which alone they had knowledge. The necessary consequence of such sentiments was a perilous deviation from Christian modes of thought and life."* "A perilous deviation from Christian modes of thought and life!" That is to put the matter very mildly. Even in Petrarch's time—as we learn from some expressions used by him,† there were those who pronounced it a mark of stupidity and ignorance to prefer the Christian religion to ancient philosophy. It must be confessed that there are versions of that religion which hardly deserve the preference. But—for this is my present point—certain it is that in the latter half of the fifteenth century, men had very widely learnt the lesson thus taught, and had bettered the instruction. Paulsen says roundly, "The old Christian virtues, humility, self-denial, obedience, faith, piety, lost their attractions in the eyes of the new race: unrestrained enjoyment and

* Vol. i. p. 23.

† See Körting's *Geschichte der Literature Italiens im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, vol. i. pp. 426–7.

free thought, pride and defiant independence, impatience of a master, boldness and strength daring to seize upon everything it can—such are the traits of perfection which hovered before the most advanced spirits of the new time." *

These words accurately describe the leading Italian Humanists of the culminating period of the Renaissance: men like Poggio, Filelfo, Beccadelli, Valla—than whom it would be impossible to find characters further removed from the Christian type. Indeed, for them Christianity was practically non-existent. It was outside their sphere of thought, and did not at all influence their actions. Its claim to prescribe to men what to believe and do was ignored. The Middle Ages had stood under the immediate influence of Christian antiquity. The apostles of the new learning accounted them a mere interregnum of barbarism, and went back to pre-Christian antiquity. But what attracted them there was not its graver and deeper teaching. The eyes of their understanding were dimmed by the sensuous dust of the epoch in which they lived, so that they could not read the profound lessons taught by the great masters of the recovered literature, "those wise old spirits," as Jeremy Taylor happily speaks, "who preserved natural reason and religion in the midst of heathen darkness." Plato, indeed, received a sort of worship from some of them; but it was an ignorant wor-

* *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterricht, &c.*, vol. i. p. 49.

ship: his deep mystic significance, his "inspiration," Quintilian calls it, "by the spirit of the Delphic Oracle," quite escaped them. Nor did they in the least understand the message delivered to all time, by the mighty masters of Hellenic tragedy, proclaiming "those unwritten and unchanging laws" which "ever live, and no one knows their birth-tide:" laws ruling over all by their mandates and by their penalties, absolute, indefeasible, inexorable. All this they did not see. What they did see in Pagan antiquity was beauty of form. That, for them, was the conclusion of the whole matter. In their revolt against mediæval spiritualism, with its proscription of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, they sought in ancient Rome and Hellas another measure and interpretation of human existence. They had no difficulty in finding it, no scruple in adopting it, no hesitation in recommending it. The practical result, according to Symonds, an unsuspected witness, was "the enervation of society in worse than heathen vices."* He thinks it "almost impossible to over-estimate the moral corruption of Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century." "Virtuous women," he asserts, "had no place there; but Phryne lived again in the person of Imperia, and dignitaries of the Church thought it no shame to parade their preference for Giton."† "The imitation of the

* *Revival of Learning*, p. 407. † *Ibid.* p. 406.

ancients, in thought, sentiments, and language, was no mere affectation. . . . The standards of moral and æsthetic taste were paganized." * And "the Humanists came to be dreaded as the corruptors of youth." †

It must not, however, be supposed that the Italian leaders of the Renaissance openly rebelled against the Church. "Intus ut libet, foris ut moris est," was their rule. They were not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, even had their convictions been deep and earnest. I remember a story of one of them who, on being asked how, with his opinions, he could profess belief in the Trinity, expressed readiness to profess belief in a Quaternity, if required. Of course ecclesiastical persons and things were abundantly flouted and mocked, as indeed was natural. It is difficult to decide whether the more dominant characteristic of the rulers of the Church in that age was greed of gain or laxity of life. Both were excellent topics for the wits of the new learning. And they must be allowed to have produced epigrams ‡

* *Revival of Learning*, p. 396. † *Ibid.* p. 407.

‡ This by Pontanus Maximus on Alexander VI. may serve as a specimen :

"Vendit Alexander claves, altaria, Christum;
Emerat ille prius; vendere jure potest."

A fitting pendant to it is his epitaph on Lucrezia Borgia :

"Hoc tumulo dormit Lucretia nomine, sed re
Thais; Alexandri filia, sponsa, nurus."

which have seldom been surpassed in finished mordancy. Of course the *literati* of the period entertained no desire to reform the state of things whereby they had their gain. The vast system of exactions established by the *Curia* in the time of John XXII., under the name of Annates, Reservations, and Expectancies—not to mention other very questionable sources of the Pontifical revenue—which were in full working order, furnished no small portion of the wealth flowing to Rome, in which they shared, directly or indirectly. They were not reformers, but they were Protestants, in a sense. The word Protestant, indeed, was not as yet coined, but it is properly applicable to them. For example, a great deal of Valla's famous pamphlet against the Papacy is couched in language strongly resembling that employed in the next century by the controversialists who bore that designation. "Valdensis potius quam Vallensis appellandus est," one of his opponents remarked. But Valla was in no danger of the doom which fell upon "the slaughtered saints * " of Milton's sonnet. The Pontifical authorities took his performances very lightly, some of them, indeed, finding in his insolent invectives merely food for laughter; and he pursued undisturbed the profitable tenour of his way, as professor, canon, and curialist. It is a token of "the incredible liberty"—so Filelfo

* Concerning whom I would refer the reader to a very fine passage of Landor (*Works*, vol. iii. p. 332, *et seq.*)—one of the finest he ever wrote.

called it—which prevailed in Rome:* of the protestation against medieval Christianity made there in all departments of thought and action. One has no difficulty in understanding how Heine, surveying the period with his diabolically keen eyes, was led to write: "In art as in life, a contemporary Protestantism reigned; Leo X., the magnificent Medici, was just as zealous a Protestant as Luther; and as at Wittenberg there was a Protestantism in Latin prose, so in Rome there was a Protestantism in stone, colour, and *ottava rima*. For do not the mighty marble forms of Michael Angelo, the nymphs with the smiling faces of Giulio Romano, and the cheerful intoxication of life in the Venus of the Maëstro Ludovico, form a protesting contrast to dreary old effete Catholicism? The painters of Italy carried on a polemic against clericalism perhaps far more effectually than the Saxon theologians. The glowing flesh in the pictures of Titian is all Protestantism. The hips of his Venus are far deeper theses than those which the German monk nailed to the church door of Wittenberg. It was as though men had suddenly found themselves liberated from the constraint of a thousand years. The

* Paul II. certainly exercised some severities against the Roman Academy, torturing and imprisoning certain of its members. But he was actuated by political, not theological motives; he was incensed against them, not as pagans but as supposed conspirators.

artists, in particular, once more breathed freely, as the nightmare of Christendom seemed rolled away from their breast; enthusiastically did they plunge into the sea of Greek cheerfulness, out of whose foam the goddesses of beauty again arose before their eyes; the painters painted again the ambrosial joys of Olympus; the sculptors chiselled again with the old joy, the old heroes out of the block of marble; the poets sang again the house of Atreus and Laos. The period of the new classical poetry arose." *

IV.

Such was the genesis of the movement whose culminating period is in the second half of the fifteenth century and the first quarter of the sixteenth. In the next five chapters I propose to consider some of its more marked characteristics as revealed to us by five great men who may be taken to be types of it. I remember one of the most accomplished scholars it has been my good fortune to meet saying to me that in investigating the past the problem is to extract general history from individual histories; or, to quote his own words, "zu finden die allgemeine Geschichte in Einzelndarstellungen." I think that is profoundly true. History has been called the essence of innumerable biographies. The vast majority of

* *Die Romantische Schule:* in *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. vi. p. 34.

them, of course, tell the same monotonous tale. But in the lives of great men the spirit of the age in which they worked is, in some sort, incarnate, and so may be most fruitfully studied. Cicero, in a well-known passage, speaks of them as luminaries in the world's career. So they are. And they radiate light on their times. They see by the illumination of genius which is in them; and in their light we may see light. True, they see in part. They may survey their age from only one point of view. They may discern only one side of the complex questions with which they have to deal. It cannot, in most cases, be otherwise.

> "What do we see? Each man a space
> Of some few yards before his face."

We cannot see more of what lies level to us in the present. Only the future supplies the vantage ground from which we may take a general survey of an age. It is "Time that solves all doubt, by bringing Truth, his glorious daughter, out." But what great men do see, they see with the clear vision of intellectual and spiritual superiority. And to them we must go for the interpretation of the ideas, inspirations, tendencies, events, among which they lived.

And so it appears to me that if we carefully consider the careers of Michael Angelo, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Luther, and Sir Thomas More, we shall find abundant light upon the astonishing epoch of

transition in which their lot was cast. Each is, I think, specially representative of a phase of it specially important to us in this far-off time. I shall, of course, have to dwell upon that hereafter. It will be observed that only one of the five is an Italian. Only in one department of intellectual activity was the meaning of the Renaissance fully apprehended and unfolded in Italy. In the arts of design that land of beauty held the first place. And the long succession of gifted souls who, from Giotto and Niccola Pisano, carried them on from one degree of excellence to another, and whose memorials are with us unto this day, culminate in Michael Angelo. I speak thus advisedly. No one will deny Raphael's high desert as a draughtsman, a colourist, a master of graceful composition. These excellences are as evident as is the wide range of his subjects, as is the multiform variety of his style; although, perhaps, in expression he has been surpassed by his master, Perugino—the last and greatest of the Umbrian school, which carried on the tradition of Christian spiritualism. But in imagination, grandeur, and passionate intensity, Michael Angelo stands alone. No other has made the human form symbolize emotion and thought in so high a degree. The noblest function of art—I shall return to this topic in the next chapter—is to eliminate what is accidental, trivial, temporary; to set before us what is essential, profound, eternal. This is what Michael Angelo has done,

as no one else has done it, with his brush and with his chisel. And in his sonnets we have the key to interpret his sculpture and his paintings.

I take Michael Angelo, then, to be the typical artist of the Renaissance; its highest representative in the domain of æsthetics. For its other types we must go elsewhere than to Italy. The people of that country are gifted, beyond all other nations, with a sense of form. It was natural that the supreme master of the arts of design should arise among them. But in other departments of intellectual activity they are mediocre and worse. Great men have been among them. But how few! The race is lacking in veracity, in virility, and therefore in originality. Just as in the present day those who claim to represent its political ideals are mere plagiarists from the French, so in the Renaissance epoch those who claimed to represent its literary ideals were mere plagiarists from antiquity. They copied, closely enough, what they could, which was mere externality. The form in some of the Italian Humanists is excellent. But it is employed to enshrine the vulgar, the commonplace, the animal. Probably there is no literature extant more barren of thought than the neo-classical of Italy at the apogee of the Renaissance. Its *literati* called themselves poets. They were, in truth, mere pedants. But pedants are often good schoolmasters. And the most important function of the Italian Humanists was to

teach what they knew to men of nobler races who should find in it an instrument for working out the underlying ideas of the Renaissance. Erasmus and Reuchlin went to school to them, as all the world knows. More never came into personal intercourse with them, for he never actually visited Italy; but, as is observed by the latest of his biographers, and not the least judicious, they profoundly influenced him. A "keen classical scholar," he was "well acquainted with the chief *savants* and *littérateurs* of Europe," and "his introduction of Pico della Mirandola to the English reader was probably undertaken with the intention of making England alive to the importance of the movement in Italian thought." He "assimilated a great deal of the Italian culture of his day, without adopting its vices; he was an 'Italianate Englishman' in a different sense from that which the expression bore fifty years after his death." * Luther's obligations to Italian Humanists were even greater. They had provided for him the whole of his polemical equipment, with the single exception of his doctrine of Justification, which—as I shall show later on—was unquestionably his own invention. "All Luther did," writes Monnier, "was to pick up in Italy ideas which were everywhere lying about (*traînant par terre*) and to which the reformed dogma was subsequently added. The novelist Masuccio would do away with Purgatory.

* *Sir Thomas More*, by William Holden Hutton, pp. 29–34.

Pope Pius II. inclined towards the marriage of the clergy. The learned Galateo, in his dialogue *Heremita*, regards the Gospels as the sole source of faith, opposes the subtleties of useless scholasticism, and denies the right of the Church to condemn; and Lorenzo Valla hurls against the Temporal Power his famous book on *The Donation of Constantine* which Ulrich von Hutten was to publish later on." * I add that Valla too, and many other masters of the Renaissance, anticipated Luther in writing against religious celibacy, and in the views which he came to hold concerning the relations of the sexes.

V.

And now, before I close this introductory chapter, I should like to say a few words about the spirit in which I approach the task before me. Of its arduousness I am fully conscious. Such consciousness is an indispensable qualification for attaining any measure of success in it. And what makes it especially arduous is not the variety and extent of the studies necessary for adequately discharging it, or even the hardness of estimating the relative value of authorities. There is another and more subtle difficulty concerning which I may venture to cite words of my own,

* *Le Quattrocento*, p. 102.

as I do not think I shall find others better to express my meaning. "Let us suppose that the historian has judiciously collected from the various sources open to him a quantity of facts sufficient to constitute a chain of evidence, and has tested them by the critical process. His next step is to marshal those facts in their logical order, and so to indicate, more or less directly, the conclusions to which they point. Here is the difference between the critic (ὁ κριτικός) and the judge (ὁ κριτής). Now, the judicial mind is absolutely necessary to any historian worthy of the name. That vast arsenal of facts which history supplies, furnishes weapons for all parties. It was Talleyrand, I think, who remarked—at all events the remark is not unworthy of him—'Il n'y a rien qui s'arrange aussi facilement que les faits.' With the same testimony before us, it is usually possible to construct two conflicting histories, as the experience of the Law Courts sufficiently shows. Fortunately for juries, the last word is not with Counsel on either side, but with the Judge, whose duty it is, without passion or prejudice, to sum up the evidence in the interest of neither party, but of truth. And such serene detachment is the duty of historians. Precisely in proportion as they are partisans do they fall below the ideal of their high calling."* Lord Acton, in his *Inaugural Lecture* at Cambridge, spoke of "the

* *Essays and Speeches*, p. 205.

dogma of impartiality" now pretty generally professed by them. But profession is one thing, practice is quite another. In history, as elsewhere, the rule of rigid and inflexible justice commends itself to our understanding. But who is so utterly unswayed by prepossession, prejudice, passion, as undeviatingly to follow it? It is by men, not by beings of a higher order, as Schiller laments, that the annals of mankind are written. And can we say that even the most severe and self-restrained of the writers have attained to the ideal set forth by the Elizabethan poet?—

> "He that of such a height hath built his mind,
> And rear'd the dwelling of his thoughts so strong,
> As neither fear nor hope can strike the frame
> Of his resolvèd powers; nor all the wind
> Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong
> His settled peace, or to disturb the same:
> What a fair seat hath he, from whence he may
> The boundless wastes and wilds of man survey."

Yes; this *ἀταραξία*, as the Epicureans called it, is no doubt the right ideal in history. But the very constitution of human nature forbids our complete realization of any ideal; we can but approximate to it, more or less closely.

True is this of historical judgments generally. It is especially true in judging epochs of religious strife. Of all prepossessions, prejudices, passions, the theological are the most masterful. And they are not in the least eliminated by a hatred

of theology. There is a fanaticism of irreligion—the literature of our own day affords only too many examples of it—which breathes a spirit of intolerance as fierce as that which sharpened the swords of the missionaries of Islām, or fired the faggots of Spanish Inquisitors, or pointed the pikes of Cromwell's Puritans. For example, the "orthodox" freethinker, if I may be allowed the phrase, who, following the Voltairian tradition, regards Luther as the precursor of the crusade against the *Infâme*, is as unlikely to judge him truly as any orthodox Catholic, to whom he is a mere heresiarch, sufficiently disposed of by Leo X.'s Bull *Exsurge Domine*, or any orthodox Protestant, who accounts of him as the first Saint in the Calendar of the Reformation. Now, in what I am about to write, I shall endeavour to set aside altogether theological tests. I propose to speak of the memorable men who are the subjects of the next five chapters from the point of view of secular history, without trying them and their works by the standards of any school of divinity. It will be for my readers to judge how far I succeed in this undertaking.

CHAPTER II.

MICHAEL ANGELO—THE ARTIST.

I.

The first Type of the Renaissance of whom I shall speak is Michael Angelo. And that for the reason that of all the wondrous intellectual endowments of man, the artistic or æsthetic comes first. It is excellently observed by Schopenhauer, in what is perhaps the most valuable part of his great work, "The object of art, the representation of which is the aim of the artist, and the knowledge of which must therefore precede his work as its germ and source, is an Idea, in Plato's sense, and never anything else: not this special form which appears before me, but its expression, its pure significance, its inner being, which discloses itself to me, and appeals to me, and which may be quite the same, though the spatial relations of its form be very different. [And as] the Idea is not the particular thing, the object of common apprehension, [so is it] not the concept, the object of rational thought and of science. The *concept* is

abstract, discursive, entirely undetermined within its own sphere, only determined by its limits, attainable and comprehensible by him who has only reason, communicable by words, without any other assistance, entirely exhausted by its definition. The *Idea*, on the contrary, although defined as the adequate representation of the concept, is always object of perception, and although representing an infinite number of particular things, is yet thoroughly determined. It is never known by the individual, as such, but only by him who has raised himself above all willing and all individuality to the pure subject of knowledge. Thus it is attainable only by the man of genius, and by him who, for the most part through the existence of works of genius, has reached an exalted frame of mind (*in einer genialen Stimmung ist*) by increasing his power of pure knowledge. The comprehended Idea is the true and only source of every real work of art. In its powerful originality it is derived only from life itself, from nature, from the world, and that only by the true genius, or by him whose momentary inspiration reaches the point of genius. Genuine and immortal works of art spring only from that direct apprehension. The aim of all art is the communication of the comprehended Idea, which through the mind of the artist appears in such a form that it is purged and isolated from all that is foreign to it, and may now be grasped by

the man of weaker comprehension and of no productive faculty." * It appears to me that this aim has been accomplished by Michael Angelo as by no other. "The man with four souls" he has been called by one of his own countrymen: a striking if somewhat fantastic mode of expressing him. Supreme among modern sculptors, the unapproached master of the sublime and terrible in painting, an architect of lofty and daring genius, and a poet who had drunk deeply at the highest founts of inspiration, he is assuredly the greatest figure that art has ever presented: the Supreme Artist in whom, as Symonds tell us, "the genius of the Renaissance culminated": † "the Prophet or Seer of the Renaissance." ‡ And now let us proceed to study the man, § and to endeavour to

* *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung:* Book III. §§ 41, 49, 50. What I give above is not a continuous extract, but, so to speak, a mosaic.

† *Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 342. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 342.

§ The *man*. I am led here to quote some extremely striking words of Alfred de Musset: "Il n'y a pas d'art, il n'y a que des hommes. Appelez-vous art le métier de peintre, de poëté ou de musicien, en tant qu'il consiste à frottter de la toile ou du papier? Alors il y a un art, tant qu'il y a des gens qui frottent du papier et de la toile. Mais, si vous entendez par là ce qui préside au travail matériel, ce qui résulte de ce travail; si, en prononçant ce mot d'*art*, vous voulez donner un nom à cet être qui en a mille: inspiration, méditation, respect pour les règles, culte pour la beauté, rêverie et réalisation; si vous baptisez ainsi une idée abstraite quelconque, dans ce cas-là, ce que vous appelez art, c'est l'homme." *Mélanges de Littérature et de Critique*, p. 2.

discern through him some of the intellectual and spiritual characteristics of his age.

II.

With respect to the materials for obtaining a knowledge of Michael Angelo, we may reckon ourselves well off. There are few great men of whom we possess so many and such authentic documents. It is true that of his statues and paintings not a few have perished or are lost; and that some of his principal works which have come down to us are marred by the neglect and dishonour of centuries. But still, what remains to the world of his labours in the arts to which he dedicated his life is much; and of late years it has received valuable additions in the various drawings from his hands, which have been rescued from secret repositories and made accessible in Galleries and Museums. It is the good fortune of the world, too, in the present age, to possess for the first time the authentic text of his poems in Signor Guasti's admirable edition, of which I shall have to say more hereafter. Then, again, much peculiarly interesting information has been opened to us, in the collection of his autograph letters, acquired a few years ago by the British Museum, and in the still larger collection bequeathed to the city of Florence, with many other very valuable relics of

him, by his far-off kinsman, Cosimo Buonarroti. I shall not here discuss the merits of the *Lives* which have been written of him. Condivi's, which is the earliest of them, is certainly the best. Symonds's, which is the latest, is certainly not the worst. The most ambitious, I suppose, is Herr Grimm's: a learned and suggestive work, but marred by the author's incapacity to understand the Italian mind of the period in which Michael Angelo lived. It is a grave defect: for in education, feelings, habits, belief, Michael Angelo was essentially a man of that period: a citizen of sixteenth century Florence; not a nineteenth century professor or doctrinaire.

It may be said of the several parts of Michael Angelo's life, as was said of his works by the friend who knew him best, that they "stand altogether, as if one." He is "whole in himself:" from first to last that unity which is a token of the highest natures is impressed upon his long career. Still there are three periods in it, which are in several respects distinctly marked off, and it may be well to take note of them, bearing in mind the essential identity of his character, his supreme individuality throughout. They correspond respectively to the seasons of youth, manhood, and old age, according to the ancient Roman reckoning yet current in Italy in his day. Born in 1474, his first five-and-twenty years were his period of discipleship in various schools and under very different masters.

It is not, perhaps, until the year 1500 that he can be regarded as fully formed and his bent as taken. The next thirty years are the epoch of his matured powers. The world owes to them the works which are judged his greatest. For him, those years were full of almost unintermittent trouble and suffering, of intolerable humiliations, blighted hopes, ungathered harvests; much even of what it was permitted him to accomplish, thwarted and marred—

> "not answering the aim
> And that unbodied figure of the thought
> That gav't surmiséd shape."

In the ultimate scene of his life, which we may date from his sixtieth year, these "protractive trials of great Jove" are well-nigh over, and the "persistive constancy" which they have found has its reward. His last three decades realize, in many respects, that fine ideal of old age which Cicero has sketched in *Cato Major*. For this final period of recognized greatness and clear fame is built upon the foundations of virtue and piety, laid in youth and established in manhood. It is fruitful in noble activity and lofty thought; it is cheered by true and illustrious friendships, until in its fulness it is crowned by "the sweet wise death of old men honourable." Not until 1564 did the summons to depart come to him. He had then almost completed his eighty-ninth year.

It will be no slight help in a study of Michael Angelo if we can obtain some real apprehension of the scenes and influences among which his youth was passed and his character moulded. Happily, abundant sources are open to us for forming a view of Florentine life at the period of which I speak. In the frescoes with which Ghirlandaio has covered the walls of Santa Maria Novella we have the outward semblance of the men and women of the time, and even portraits of some of the most famous. Machiavelli is the exponent of the dominant political ideas of the age. Politian presents the highest point attained by its scholarship. Guicciardini is its exact and impartial historian. Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola unfold its fashionable philosophy. The sermons of Savonarola tell us of its moral and spiritual condition. The treasures of art and literature which were before the eyes of men then, are, for the most part, before our eyes now. Of the crowd of chroniclers, versifiers, and pedants, from whose intrinsically worthless writings facts of interest are here and there to be gathered, the time would fail me to speak. Nor of the numerous works, differing very widely in knowledge and in literary skill, which have done so much of late years in every country of Europe to illustrate the condition of human society at this epoch, can I mention more than one. It is to a great English writer of fiction that we owe the book, so slight

and unpretending in form, in which is to be found the best picture of the Florence of Michael Angelo's youth: a picture executed with an accuracy and completeness worthy of an exact scholar, and with an insight, and delicacy, and creative power which the poet-soul alone commands. The Florence of the closing fifteenth century, still free and encircled like a queen with her diadem of towers, still able to "ring her bells with the solemn hammer sound"—il dolce suono della libertà—that used to beat on the hearts of men; Florence, with her grave, black-robed burghers, passionate alike in their love for their commune and in their party hatreds; Florence, the home of Christian art, and the treasury of recovered antiques; the last rallying-place of medieval Christianity, and the nursery of the new learning, lives before us in the pages of *Romola*.

This was the Florence of Michael Angelo's early years. Little on which it is worth while to dwell has come down to us regarding his boyhood, beyond the fact that his indomitable force of character, and passionate devotion to art, asserted themselves very early. Condivi, the most authentic and authoritative of his biographers, tells us how books were to him "a dull and endless strife;" how he was very often marvellously beaten ("bene spesso stranamente battuto") because he would neglect his appointed tasks to handle a pencil or to wander about in the workshops of artists. He

appears to have acquired little in Francesco da Urbino's school beyond the ability to read and write his own vernacular Tuscan. It is certain that he knew no other language. Even with Latin,* then the *lingua franca* of educated men, he never possessed any acquaintance beyond the knowledge of a few words and phrases, derived chiefly, no doubt, from attendance at the public offices of religion celebrated in that tongue. At last his father, Ludovico—described as a good, devout man of the old school †—yielded to the inevitable, although not without many a pang, for the arts of painting and sculpture were

* Direct and conclusive evidence of Michael Angelo's ignorance of Latin occurs in a conversation between him and certain of his acquaintances, in 1545, recorded by one of them, Donato Giannotti, and first published at Florence in 1859. Signor Guasti, in his introductory *Discorso*, gives a long extract from this very valuable document. (See pp. xxvi.–xxxiv.) There is in Gualandi's collection of *Lettere Artistiche*—it is No. 6—a letter in very bad Latin, purporting to be addressed by Michael Angelo to Francesco Fortunati, in 1504. Apart from all question as to the language, the tone and sentiments of this letter are, as it seems to me, absolutely conclusive against his authorship of it. At the same time, I do not agree with Grimm that the letter is not authentic, or that the request for money which it contains is fatal to it. I believe it to have been composed *for* Michael Angelo, either by a friend or a professional letter-writer whose aid he thought fit to seek, according to a common custom, to supply his own ignorance of the polite tongue, in addressing a dignified ecclesiastic.

† "Uomo religioso e buono e piuttosto d' antichi costumi che nò." Condivi, *Vita di M. A. B.* c. iv.

not held in high esteem then as callings in life.*

Michael Angelo had just attained the age of thirteeen, when, in 1488, the decisive step was taken, and he was apprenticed "to Domenico and David Currado, commonly called Ghirlandaio." A better choice could not have been made. Domenico Ghirlandaio was reckoned among the first of Florentine artists then living. And justly. For his works, if not distinguished by profound originality or subtle and delicate feeling, are marked by accuracy of execution, dignity of manner, and exquisiteness of finish. Thoroughly versed in the science collected by his predecessors, he belonged to a school of eminent men who were no mere specialists, but artists in the widest sense of the word. Like Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Verocchio, and Donatello, Ghirlandaio regarded the whole field of the arts of design as his own, and passed from one department to another with

* *Vita*, c. v. It may be observed that his disinclination to allow his son to become an artist did not arise, as Harford imagines (*Life of Michael Angelo*, vol. i. pp. 7, 13), from any notion of the consideration due to "the blood of the ancient counts of Canossa." Heath Wilson shows (*Life and Letters of Michael Angelo*, p. 4), that this genealogy, although believed by Michael Angelo himself, on what he thought good authority, was not put forward before his time, and is untenable. He was a gentleman, indeed, in the technical sense of the word, the Buonarroti Simoni to whom he belonged being a Florentine family of ancient burgher nobility; their arms appear to have been originally azure two bends or: to this coat was added a label of four points gule enclosing three fleur-de-lys or.

the ease of the master, familiar not only with the practice but the principles of art, imbued with the knowledge and the feeling of form.

As a pupil of the Ghirlandaii, Michael Angelo came under influences which it is important to apprehend correctly. Symonds, with reason, regards Domenico Ghirlandaio as summing up in himself the whole tradition of the Tuscan school. And the mighty works of that school were before the youthful Buonarroti, to illustrate the lessons taught him by Domenico, and doubtless to convey to his keen æsthetic perceptions profounder lessons than any that Domenico could teach him. We know how earnestly he used to study the frescoes of Masaccio in the Branacci Chapel, and that far greater work of Giotto's, so rich in depth of feeling and creative power, the Entombment in Santa Croce. We know, too, how reverently he would contemplate the saints and angels whom Fra Angelico seemed to have drawn down from heaven, how greatly he esteemed the incomparable gates of Ghiberti, and the all but animated types of that prophetic anticipation of himself—Donatello. These were the masters by whom his earliest studies were governed: men whose conception of their vocation was the highest and noblest. The dominant note of them all is the same. Whatever the personal shortcomings of some, the spirit in which they worked was religious. Art was not to them its own end. It reached forward to some-

thing beyond. They thought of it as an instrument to body forth the forms of things unknown, to manifest a deeper verity and a nobler beauty than external nature yields. Ruskin has tersely summed up the difference between them and those who came after them. These early masters, he says, "used their powers of painting to show the objects of faith:" whereas the later schools "used the objects of faith that they might show their powers of painting." *

But the medieval Tuscan was not the only art school in which Michael Angelo studied. There were other artistic influences very powerful and attractive, and of a very different kind, under which he came at this period. It was the age of excavation, and nowhere were the relics of antiquity more eagerly collected and more highly prized than in Florence. In his fifteenth year Michael Angelo left Ghirlandaio's studio to become an inmate of the palace of Lorenzo de' Medici—that first and most magnificent of dilettantis—who had discerned the boy's genius, and was anxious to foster it. In "the Garden at St. Mark's," which Lorenzo had "adorned with various ancient statues and figures," Michael Angelo found examples of technical perfection such as the modern world was powerless to offer, and he threw himself with all the intensity of his nature into the study of the antique. He con-

* *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. p. 108.

tinued in the Medici Palace until Lorenzo's death, in 1492, "every day," Condivi tells us, "showing some fruits of his labours to the Magnifico," and associating with the "learned baskers in the same princely patronage," conspicuous among whom were Ficino and Landino, Pulci and Politian. It was here chiefly that Michael Angelo acquired whatever information he possessed regarding the philosophy and poetry of the ancients. All the evidence available to us goes to show that such information was very limited. Politian, we read in Condivi, used to tell him stories out of the classical mythology, and to propose them to him as subjects for his work; and this is, apparently, the sum of what Heath Wilson somewhat grandiosely designates his "study of literature" under that scholar. Of the Platonic doctrine, or rather of the neo-Platonic, to which Lorenzo was so devoted, Michael Angelo doubtless heard much. It was ever his wont to delight in the conversation of learned men, and this was the favourite topic of discussion in Lorenzo's circle. But there is nothing to show that he ever gave himself seriously to its study, and there is a very strong presumption to the contrary. Plato and Plotinus were inaccessible to him, whether in the original Greek or in Ficino's Latin version; and no vernacular translation was in existence.* Nor can I agree

* A *Compendio della dottrina di Platone in quello che è conforme con la Fede nostra* was published at Rome in 1544 by Francesco

with Harford that their influence is to be traced in his "lofty idealism, love of allegory, and mystical views of art and nature." It is certain, indeed, that these qualities are among his leading characteristics. But it is not to the disputations of the so-called Platonic Academy—mere echoes, for the most part, of the sterile jargon of Byzantine sophists—that we should refer them. Doubtless his finely organized and eminently receptive nature was keenly sensitive to the intellectual atmosphere in which he lived, and for the three years of his residence in the Medicean palace he breathed an air of classical Paganism. Still, the permanent effect upon his character appears to have been largely exaggerated. I shall have occasion to say more upon this subject later on in discussing the "Platonism" of his Sonnets. At present I break off from it to touch upon the third great influence which was brought to bear upon his youth.

While still a resident with Lorenzo de' Medici, Michael Angelo had begun to feel the enchantment of the greatest of his countrymen, and had commenced that study of the *Divine Comedy* which he continued with such devotion throughout his life.* It was when he had returned to his

de' Vieri; and in the same year Ercole Barbèra published at Venice an Italian version of the *Symposium*, with Ficino's comment. This is the earliest Platonic literature, I believe, to which Michael Angelo could possibly have had access.

* I will give one of his Sonnets—written when he was over seventy—to illustrate his feeling about Dante, whom he

father's house, after the death of his patron, that he was brought fully under the spell of one in

regarded as his master in poetry and philosophy, and whose fervent love of country he emulated. I place by the side of it Symonds's translation :—

Dal ciel discese, e col mortal suo, poi
Che visto ebbe l' inferno giusto e 'l pio,
Ritornò vivo a contemplare Dio,

Per dar di tutto il vero lume a noi :
Lucente stella, che co 'raggi suoi

Fe chiaro, a torto, el nido ove naqqu'io,
Nè sare 'l premio tutto 'l mondo rio :
Tu sol' che la creasti, esser quel puoi.
Di Dante dico, che mal conosciute

Fur l' opre suo da quel popolo ingrato,
Che solo a' iusti manca di salute.

Fuss' io pur lui ! c' a tal fortuna nato,
Per l' aspro esilio suo, con la virtute,
Dare' del mondo il più felice stato.

From heaven his spirit came, and, robed in clay,
The realms of justice and of mercy trod :
Then rose a living man to gaze on God,
That he might make the truth as clear as day.
For that pure star that brightened with his ray
The undeserving nest where I was born,
The whole wide world would be a prize to scorn ;
None but his Maker can due guerdon pay.
I speak of Dante, whose high work remains
Unknown, unhonoured, by that thankless brood
Who only to just men deny their wage.
Were I but he ! born for like lingering pains,
Against his exile coupled with his good
I'd gladly change the world's best heritage !

The sixth line was doubtless inspired by Dante's " Del bello ovile ov'io dormii agnello," *Paradiso*, xxv. 5. Symonds's translation is, I think, one of his least felicitous. The force of the lines—

Nè sare 'l premio tutto 'l mondo rio :
Tu sol' che la creasti, esser quel puoi,

is well-nigh lost in the rendering—

The whole wide world would be a prize of scorn ;
None but his Maker could due guerdon pay.

" Rio " does not mean wide, and Symonds has quite missed the force of the transition to the second person singular.

The whole bad world would not be a reward :
Thou only, who hast made him, canst be that,

is, at all events, a more faithful rendering.

whom the soul of the poet might seem to have revisited Florence, to do the work of a prophet, and to receive a prophet's reward. Savonarola is the true spiritual successor of Dante, in the austerity of his temperament, in the loftiness of his thought, in his keen realization of the unseen, and his terrible power of depicting it: in his love of country and hatred of injustice, in the fierceness of his denunciations, and the rigid orthodoxy of his faith.* In any epoch a high, ardent, and impulsive nature like that of Michael Angelo would have been drawn to such a soul by the irresistible attraction of spiritual affinities. But the greatness and purity of Savonarola stood out in clearer splendour and a more imperious winningness from the moral littleness and spiritual corruption of the generation to which he delivered his ineffectual message, and may well have seemed to the youthful Buonarroti an example of utter whiteness. I glanced at this subject in the previous chapter. It will be in place here to enlarge upon it a little.

* It is important to remember that—as Hettner emphatically puts it—the reform which Savonarola desired was "not of the doctrine of the Church to which, all his life long, he clung with most unwavering conviction, as alone bringing salvation, but of the degenerate Papacy, the degenerate hierarchy, of the ever-increasing dechristianization of culture (*Bildung*), of the wantonness and worldliness of social and moral surroundings. 'Whoever withdraws from the Roman Church,' he declared, 'withdraws from Christ; but flee from Rome which is like unto Babylon, and turn to penance.'" *Italienische Studien zur Geschichte der Renaissance*, p. 146.

There are, then, many ages of the world of which the historian will judge with the greater caution and hesitation, in proportion as his knowledge is wide and accurate. Good and evil are ever closely blended, and the effect of a more intimate acquaintance with the facts of some periods once reckoned among the darkest in the annals of the human race, has been, to a certain extent, to re-habilitate them. But the more thorough our investigation, the more extensive our knowledge of the ethical condition of society in the second half of the fifteenth century, the darker is the picture which presents itself to us, in the whole of Europe, but especially in Italy. Nor is this matter for surprise. Great periods of transition are invariably periods of religious deadness and of dissolution of manners. And in this period the world was passing through a great revolution, spiritual, moral and political. The Middle Ages had run their course, and were to give place to a new order. The supernatural principles out of which their greatness and vitality had come, had, in large measure, died out, and the social framework was falling to pieces. Religion had imperceptibly lost its hold as the standard of right and wrong universally recognized, even when most widely departed from, and lived on chiefly in that dread of retributive justice which is so ineradicable an instinct of human nature. The deities of the ancient Pantheon once more asserted their

empire. Venus and Bacchus, nay, Priapus and Silenus, were worshipped with the truest cult: even in the sermons of the time, the poets and philosophers of Paganism are cited more frequently than apostles and prophets. It was an age of unblushing grossness and unrestrained debauchery. The world had lost the simple, rude virtues of earlier centuries and had not learnt the self-restraint, the decorum, the politeness of more modern times. The decadence was just as great in the political order as in the religious. The franchises and immunities which had been the bulwarks of liberty in the Middle Ages were everywhere openly attacked or secretly undermined; and the Church had sunk into the accomplice of secular tyranny.

Perhaps there is no better mode of correctly estimating the change that had come over Christendom than by considering attentively its spiritual chiefs. The throne of Gregory VII., of Alexander III., of Innocent III. was occupied in succession during the last thirty-five years of the fifteenth century, by Pietro Barba, Francesco delle Rovere, Giambattista Cibo and Roderigo Borgia. The pontificates of these four men supply the measure of the depth to which the papacy had fallen. In the long line of their predecessors in the Chair of Peter, some doubtless may be found in whose lives it is equally hard to discern "the signs of

an Apostle." What peculiarly distinguishes these and other Popes of the same period is, not their immeasurable remoteness from the ideal elevation of their great position, but their disregard, their apparent unconsciousness of the duties and responsibilities which the very theory of that position involves. In them the Vicar of Christ is merged in the Italian Prince, as deeply engaged as any of his neighbours in the blood-stained politics of the peninsula, as regardless of civic rights or chartered liberties; the object to which their ecclesiastical administration is directed, and all the awful sanctities of their spiritual primacy are prostituted: the acquisition, no matter by what means, of territory for themselves or for their worthless families.

It was in this age of profound corruption in the Church and the world that Girolamo Savonarola arose, as one born out of due time, to lift up a last voice on behalf of religion and liberty, which seemed to be departing from the earth. To Florence, the most beautiful of Italian cities, and the most corrupt, the very centre of the brilliant Paganism which had fascinated the souls of men, the stern ascetic preacher came to testify of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. In the yoke of the Medici he saw, as he thought, the very root of the evil which paralyzed religion and morality in the city: the *festas*, the intellectual and sensual gratifications, so profusely provided by the predominant house, were, as he

discerned, the mess of pottage for which the citizens were bartering their birthright of freedom. The office said in his honour for well-nigh a century after his death in many of the Tuscan churches, where he was honoured as a Saint and a Martyr, makes mention of the swiftness of his speech, the sublimity of his eloquence, the majesty of his aspect. "The Word of God," he cried, "is in my heart like a consuming fire, and if I do not speak it will consume the very marrow of my bones." The fire did indeed consume him; another fire than that whereof he spoke; and with him the liberties of Italy and the last hope of the conservation of the unity of Christendom. But his words lived on in the hearts of those who had listened to him—to the end, Michael Angelo used to recall vividly the tones of his voice—and were handed down from generation to generation in Tuscany, to keep alive remembrance of the past and hope for the future, during the three centuries of the enslavement of Italy. Well does Signor Guasti remark:

"Here was the school in which the ardent spirit of Buonarroti composed his youthful thoughts to an unwonted gravity. In such a training ground did he strengthen his heart and his genius. When I see Michael Angelo among the Piagnoni, I understand how, in the decay of faith and morals, he kept himself believing and pure: how among the satellites of tyranny he remained a child of freedom, and could still infuse into art a breath of religion and liberty." *

* *Discorso*, p. xi.

These, then, were the chief factors of Michael Angelo's spiritual and intellectual training: the influence of the art schools of medieval Christendom, and especially of the Tuscan school; the influence of the art, poetry, and philosophy of antiquity; and the influence of Dante and Savonarola. In speaking of these influences I have followed the order in which they came into his life. Let us now see what his early productions disclose to us of the workings of his mind, and of the course which his thoughts took.

Among the many precious things in the Casa Buonarroti there are two bas-reliefs of especial interest as being the first original compositions of Michael Angelo. The one represents the Battle of the Centaurs with the Lapithæ; the other the Madonna with the Holy Child. These works of the boy of fourteen are very valuable revelations of him at the beginning of his career. Of the two, the battle is by far the more meritorious performance. We are told that Michael Angelo highly prized it, and took pleasure in it, even to old age. And well he might, for, although not free from the technical defects inseparable, even in the case of the greatest genius, from want of experience, it is instinct with power, daring, and originality. But it is more important to us for our present purpose, as showing how thoroughly his mind had grasped the antique conception which he set himself to represent. The spirit of

the work is as truly classical as the subject. The scene lives before us as vividly under his chisel as in the verses of Ovid.

The Madonna, executed at the same period, is a work as inferior to this in inspiration as it is in execution. It is perhaps not too much to say that it reveals no trace of any real apprehension of the subject; there is no insight, no touch of religious feeling. It is an imitation—and not a successful one—of Donatello.

These two creations may both be referred to the year 1490, when Michael Angelo was most fully under the influence of Lorenzo and the Medicean coterie. The one is instinct with that influence. The other is a faint echo of past studies in Christian Art. I now proceed, starting from these two types, to glance at his artistic career through the ten years which remain of the first period of his life, as we are considering it—that is, until 1500. It will be well to set down here in the briefest way the chronology of that decade. In 1492, Lorenzo de' Medici died, and Michael Angelo, now seventeen years of age, returned to his father's house. In the course of the next year he began those profound anatomical studies to which he owed his perfect knowledge of the human form. It was at this time that he was most powerfully drawn towards Savonarola. It was probably then, too, that he began to give himself to that diligent perusal of the Sacred

Scriptures of which Condivi speaks.* In 1494, the year of the flight of Pier de' Medici, the son of his patron, he went to Venice and thence to Bologna, where he sculptured one of the angels over the shrine of St. Dominic. In the course of the following year he returned to Florence, where he remained until 1496. The next five years he passed in Rome. It will be remembered that 1498 was the date of Savonarola's martyrdom.

It was during these ten years that Michael Angelo's character was fully formed. Many of his productions which would have been most helpful to us in tracing its development, have perished—the Hercules in marble, the wooden Crucifix which he made for the church of Santo Spirito, his statue of the youthful St. John, the sleeping Cupid, bought by the Cardinal of San Giorgio as an antique. But of his works on classical subjects we have remaining—the Cupid, which, after so many years of loss, was so strangely discovered,† and which now adorns the South

* *Vita*, c. lxv. For his Biblical studies Michael Angelo must have used the Italian version of Nic. Malermi, a Camaldolese monk, printed at Venice, in two volumes, in 1471.

† "Some years ago the Professor Miliarini and the eminent sculptor the Cavaliere Santarelli visited the gardens of the Oricellari, in Florence, to look at some works of art. . . . The attention of Santarelli was attracted by a figure in a dark corner, and, after peering at it in the uncertain light, he called to Miliarini, and said, 'Look at that.' After an earnest and

Kensington Museum; and the Bacchus, formerly in the corridor of the Uffizi, but at present in the Bargello. It is worth while to pause a little over these statues.

They were executed in the same year, 1496, and are both very beautiful; the Cupid singularly so. But they display very little of the classical inspiration which we find in such ample measure in the bas-relief of the Centaurs and the Lapithæ. There the Greek idea is really expressed. In these statues we have, indeed, technical correctness and perfection worthy of the antique, but the thought is not that of the ancient world. The Cupid is no divinity of Greece or Rome, but a young hunter, "a muscular youth of about nineteen years of age, a figure of perfect early manhood."* The Bacchus is not the "Candidus Bassareus" of the ancients, with the thyrsus and the sacred cista, its mysterious contents veiled by vine and ivy leaves, "the great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth," but an exquisitely modelled and beautifully finished representation of bibulous humanity, "the countenance joyous, the eyes distorted and wanton, as of those overcome with love of wine."† These two works are sufficient to show how, in the six years which had

startled look he said, 'It is his'; and the sculptor replied, 'Certainly it is his.' This is the statue which is now the chief ornament of the South Kensington Museum." Heath Wilson's *Life and Letters of Michael Angelo*, p. 33.

* Heath Wilson, p. 32. † Condivi, *Vita*, c. xix.

seen Michael Angelo ripen into early manhood, the influence of classicalism upon him had become less direct. They are, with one inconsiderable exception,* the last Pagan subjects which he ever treated in marble.

Meanwhile, the deeper and sterner teaching which had come to him had been doing its work by forming his mind in the mould of great and grave truths. It was in the year 1499 that his first real work of Christian sculpture was executed, the Pietà placed originally in a side chapel of old St. Peter's, and now the chief artistic treasure of the new Vatican Basilica. The wonderful perfection of this group has been acknowledged by every competent critic from the day it was unveiled until our own. I will not dwell upon its "purity of style, deep feeling, and knowledge of anatomy, combined with a grandeur which Michael Angelo drew from himself." † No language can do it justice; it must be seen, studied, felt, to be appreciated. And how eloquently does it speak the thought of the mind that conceived it! The sacred subject has become to him a living fact, ‡

* Viz., the Apollo which he began in 1530 for Baccio Valori, the Pope's Commissary at Florence, but never finished; as to which, see Heath Wilson, p. 353. The statue of the Dying Adonis must be regarded as another exception, if Heath Wilson (p. 31) is right in his judgment that it cannot have been executed much earlier than 1517.

† Perkins' *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. ii. p. 13.

‡ This comes out in his reply, which Condivi gives us, to the objection that he had made the Madonna too young-looking.

since the time when he first essayed to treat it. The fiery words of Savonarola and his fiery death have burnt into his soul as realities what before were to him but notions. The things of which he has read in the most earnest of books—the Bible and Dante—are apprehended by him with the keenness and directness of a new sense, for the eyes of his understanding have been opened :—

> " deep feelings had impressed
> So vividly great objects, that they lay
> Upon his mind like substances."

Here is the artist fully formed, and the law of his working fixed.

Michael Angelo was twenty-five years of age when he produced this work, and it is interesting

(I avail myself of Symonds's excellent translation.) " Do you not know that chaste women maintain their freshness far longer than the unchaste ? How much more would this be the case with a virgin into whose heart there never crept the least lascivious desire which could affect the body ? Nay, I will go further, and hazard the belief that this unsullied bloom of youth, beside being maintained in her by Nature's causes, may have been miraculously wrought to convince the world of the virginity and perpetual purity of the Mother. . . . You need not, therefore, marvel if, having regard to these considerations, I made the Most Holy Virgin, Mother of God, much younger relatively to her Son than women of her years usually appear." " This reasoning," adds Condivi, " was worthy of some learned theologians, and would have been little short of marvellous in most men, but not in him whom God and Nature fashioned, not merely to be peerless in his handiwork, but also capable of the divinest concepts." *Vita*, c. xx.

to turn to the records which remain to us of his life at that period. His own letters and Condivi's narrative enable us to picture it to ourselves pretty faithfully. The earliest piece of writing in his hand which we possess is a letter addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, the distant cousin of his old patron, a few days after his first arrival in Rome, and it is very characteristic in its simplicity and directness :—

"I have been without delay to visit the Cardinal of San Giorgio," he says, "to whom I presented your letter. He appeared to be glad to see me, and immediately expressed a wish that I should go to see certain figures, which I spent the whole day in doing, so that on that day I delivered no other of your letters. Afterwards, on Sunday . . . the Cardinal asked me if I was disposed to make something beautiful. I answered, that I could not do such fine things, but that he should see what I could do. We have purchased a piece of marble large enough to make a figure life-size, and on Monday I shall begin to work." *

He could not, indeed, afford to remain idle. Small as were his own wants—for his habits were always of Spartan frugality—his relatives at Florence were poor, and he devoted himself to the supply of their needs from the produce of his own labour. This continued throughout his life. From the first he appears to have worked incessantly. "To scorn delights and live laborious days" was, indeed, the rule which the imperious necessities of his own nature prescribed to him.

* This letter is dated June 11, 1496.

"I have no friends, I need none, and I wish to have none," he writes to his father. But his solitude was peopled by "thoughts, shapes, and forms" far transcending the realities of "this working-day world," and captivating his ardent imagination. Of the verses which we know he wrote at this period, very few remain to us. There are, however, scattered throughout his poems, vague references to these visionary loves, upon which certain writers have based speculations that his early years were marked by sensual passion and carnal indulgence.* But Signor Guasti well remarks that these are baseless dreams,† and Condivi's testimony as to the stainlessness of his youth is very direct and emphatic.‡ The mistress of Michael Angelo's thoughts, his "fancy's queen," was seen only by his inner eye. Long years were to pass away before a soul as high and noble as his own was to be manifested to him in a form of lofty and tranquil beauty. It was not until old age had overtaken him that the dreams of his youth were realized

* Thus Pater: "All tends to make us believe in the vehemence of the passions of his youth. . . He had not always been a mere Platonic lover." *Studies in the Hist. of the Renaissance*, p. 70.

† "Che volesse vedervi indicata una donna piuttosto che un' altra, farebbe de' sogni." *Discorso*, p. xxi.

‡ "So bene . . che avevan forza d' estinguere nella gioventù ogn' incomposto e sfrenato desiderio, che in lei potesse cadere" *Vita*, c. lxv.

in the pure and equal friendship of Victoria Colonna. Of those dreams, indeed, what appears to me to be a singularly beautiful and touching memorial remains to us. There is, in the Oxford Collection of his drawings, one * which may with certainty be referred to this period, representing the head of a woman, young, majestic, spiritual; the thoughtful, downcast eyes, the pure outline of the features, full of a grave, unearthly loveliness. It is, I think, the most striking of his early sketches.

III.

Michael Angelo's pure and peaceful Pietà marks the attainment of his artistic maturity. It closes the first epoch of his life, and ushers in the second —the thirty-five years from the opening of the sixteenth century, which I have reckoned the period of his manhood. He spent the first six years of this period at Florence, executing the Bruges Madonna, the bas-reliefs of the Madonna now in the Uffizi and our own Royal Academy, and the David and St. Matthew. Of his perished productions referable to these six years, the most considerable was the great Cartoon of Pisa, known now very imperfectly by the chiaroscuro picture at Holkham. The year 1505 is the date of his summons to Rome by the newly-elected Pontiff,

* It bears the number 10 in the collection.

Julius II., a somewhat singular Vicar of Christ, but a true lover of art—in some sort, too, a lover of Italy—and, notwithstanding grave infirmities of temper, a kind and sincere friend to Michael Angelo. It is in 1505 that what Condivi calls "the tragedy of the sepulchre" begins: that long-protracted, oft-thwarted project of the Mausoleum of Julius, only partially realised even in the event, to which we owe the Moses, the Slaves in the Louvre Gallery and Boboli Gardens, and, indirectly, the Vatican Basilica itself. The painting of the Sistine ceiling was begun in 1508, and occupied over three years.* In 1513 Julius died, and was succeeded by Leo X., whose reputation as a patron of art, whatever else it may rest upon, certainly is not merited by his treatment of Michael Angelo. Six of the best years of the great master's life were frittered away by this Pontiff in abortive schemes for a façade to the Church of St. Lorenzo at Florence, and in the opening of marble quarries at Serravezza for the benefit of Tuscan trade. The only work of his accomplished during Leo's pontificate is the statue of Christ in Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Leo died in 1521, and the twenty months during which his successor Adrian occupied the Papal chair were for Michael Angelo a period of freedom, religiously devoted by him to the work in which he regarded

* Not twenty months, as is usually stated. See Heath Wilson, p. 167.

his honour and reputation as involved—the monument of Julius. Giulio de' Medici, the cousin of Leo X., became Pope in 1523, under the name of Clement VII., and for the next twelve years Michael Angelo was employed by him at Florence upon the Medicean tombs, the sacristy of St. Lorenzo, and the Laurentian library.

Within these years the woe denounced by Savonarola upon Florence at last came: the extinction of her liberties—*il caduto del governo civile*. In 1527 the citizens resolved that Hippolytus and Alexander de' Medici should leave the city, and consign the fortresses of the State into the hands of the popular party. Two years afterwards the plans of Clement had been concerted with Charles V. Alexander the Moor, Clement's nephew,* was to wed Margaret, the Emperor's illegitimate daughter, and the enslavement of Florence was the condition of the ill-starred union. The citizens, hearing of these things, prepared for their defence; and among other appointments we find that of Michael Angelo as Commissary-General of the Fortifications, and "one of the Council of Ten for the Militia." Meanwhile, the Imperial forces in the pay of the Pope—they were, for the most part, the brigands who had recently sacked Rome—had advanced under the Prince of Orange, and in January, 1530, the investment of the city was complete.

* Or son according to some authorities.

Michael Angelo, who had for a brief time withdrawn to Venice, on account of the perfidy of the Florentine Commander, Malatesta, had been persuaded to return, and found full scope for the exercise of his military functions; it is well known how highly the fortifications which he erected were in after-times appreciated by Vauban. It would be a dreary task, which I gladly put aside, to write the history of the siege, to chronicle the divided counsels, the folly, the treachery, which paralyzed the heroic efforts of the last defenders of the liberties of their country. In vain did the Dominicans of St. Mark take up the work of Savonarola by fervent appeals to the religious instincts of the citizens; in vain did the ancient patriotism of the Florentines assert itself in the patient endurance of hunger and disease; in vain was the heroic Ferruccio "prodigal of his great soul." The fraud of Malatesta, the overwhelming forces of the besiegers, prevailed. The struggle was protracted until the month of August, and then Florence fell. The Medici were restored, and a regimen of tyranny, destined to last for three centuries, was established upon the ruins of the Republic.

In the proscription which followed, Michael Angelo narrowly escaped with his life. Nor was the dagger of the Medicean assassin his only danger. "He has fallen off in flesh," writes his friend Giovanni Battista Mini, in September, 1531,

"and . . . he will not live long. He works very hard, takes little nourishment, and that of a poor kind, and does not sleep at all. For a month past his sight has been impaired, and he has been suffering from pains in the head and vertigo. In fact, his head is affected, and so is his heart."* It was then that Clement, who had no desire for useless vengeance, and who, besides, wanted the Medicean tombs finished, came to his assistance, protecting him by a Brief from the importunity of those who were overwhelming him with commissions, arranging his difficulties with the heirs of Julius, and even compelling the Florentine Government to repay him money advanced to the Republic to carry on the struggle against the Medici. Until the September of 1534 Michael Angelo devoted his time, without interruption, to the monuments in the sacristy of St. Lorenzo. Then he left Florence—never to see it again—for Rome, at the summons of Clement, who died two days after his arrival. In another month Alexander Farnese was elected Pope, under the title of Paul III. A year afterwards Michael Angelo was nominated chief architect, sculptor, and painter to the Apostolic Chamber. He was sixty years old when this honour came to him. This recognition by the greatest in the Christian world of his mastery in the arts of design, found him on the threshold of old age. Let us look back over the

* Heath Wilson, p. 368.

long series of works which filled his manhood, and endeavour to read, however faintly and fragmentarily, the story they tell us about the artist.

They begin with the Madonna, now at Bruges,* and end with the Madonna in the Medici Chapel at Florence. A comparison of these two great productions is full of instruction. Both have the special notes of Michael Angelo in ample measure: power, dignity, ideality. Both are endowed with a majestic tranquillity. But in the earlier work the peace is as that of the unruffled sea when "morning breaks without a sound" upon its serene infinity. In the later, it is the "great calm" after storm and tempest have raged and have done their worst, and are now hushed: a calm more profound, and solemn, and awful. The one is as the song of a hero before the battle of life has begun: the outpouring of a noble, fresh, and resolute heart. The other is a deeper strain, and in a minor key. The fight has been fought, hopes have been destroyed, dearest affections have been wounded unto death; "all that seems" has suffered shock. But the living will has endured, invincible, and "from out the dust" is lifted

> "A voice as unto Him that hears,
> A cry above the conquered years."

There is all this, and far more than can be set

* For a discussion of "the question of the Bruges Madonna," see Symonds's *Life*, vol. i. p. 74.

down with pen, in these two great works. More even than can be interpreted in the words of poets.

And if we turn to the magnificent embodiments of the "divine master's" thought and inner life which fill up the space between, each has its lesson of profound significance. To speak of them all, or, indeed, of any of them in detail, would take me too far. I can do no more than glance hastily at the chief of them.

The first which claims our attention is the colossal David. It was completed in 1504, and, as is observed by Heath Wilson, who considers it to mark the commencement of Michael Angelo's second manner: "In it are seen the thoughts which agitated him, as he sculptured the Deliverer. It expresses, with a force which can be only felt in its presence, the calm deliberation of a being totally fearless, and deeply conscious of what depends upon the deed which he is about to do." * Vasari tells us that in this work Michael Angelo wished to remind the rulers of the commune, by an example, how to defend the city courageously, and to govern it justly. Certainly it is "fraught with patriotic meaning" and instinct with the spirit of freedom.

Let us go on several years to contemplate a work of very different character—the statues of the Captives, now in the Louvre. Originally designed to adorn the monument of Julius, these figures

* P. 50.

were probably begun by Michael Angelo soon after he was called to Rome by that Pontiff in 1505, and worked at from time to time during the next ten years, when they were left unfinished, as too large for the reduced proportions of the tomb :—

"Among all Michael Angelo's works," remarks Perkins, "there is probably none more beautiful than the sleeping prisoner, who, worn out with futile efforts to escape, rests with his noble head thrown back so as to expose his throat, his left arm raised and bent over his head, and his right arm reposing on his breast. In striking contrast to this image of sleep, the other prisoner is struggling to rend his bonds asunder, every muscle in action, and every limb contorted. His head is covered with thick masses of matted hair, and raised with an expression of rage and agony, which light up his roughly blocked out features." *

It is a composition of infinite pathos—a true expression of the sadness and sufferings of the mind which conceived it. It is at this period of his life that Michael Angelo writes to his father : "I endure great weariness and hopelessness. So it has been with me for fifteen years : never an hour's comfort." And in an earlier portion of the same letter he says : "It is enough to have bread, and to live in the faith of Christ, even as I do here, for I live humbly, nor do I care for the life or the honours of this world." It was in 1512 that these words were written. The cabals of his enemies, the clamours of his family, who preyed upon him all his life, the interior trials and con-

* Perkins' *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. ii. p. 41.

flicts of his most sensitive and scrupulous mind, were well-nigh enough to overwhelm him. And to these was to be added the vehement, inconsiderate impetuosity of the Pontiff. Five years before, when driven from Rome by an affront which he deemed unbearable, he wrote to the Pope:—

"Io sono, e fui già tuo buon servo antico;
A te son dato come i raggi al sole;
E del mio tempo non t' increscе o duole,
E men ti piaccio se più m' affatico." *

That quarrel was healed, and for the rest of Julius's life *concordia discors* reigned between them. There was too much in common between their fiery temperaments for more.†

It was in the years immediately following the death of Julius, in 1513, that most of the work was done to the statue of Moses (never quite finished), which still attracts the world to his tomb—an appropriate tribute to the Pontiff who coveted the glory of delivering Italy from the "barbarians." There is something of Julius in

* *Sonetto*, iii. Symonds translates:—

"I am thy drudge, and have been from my youth—
Thine when the rays which the sun's circle fill;
Yet of my dear time's waste thou think'st no ill:
The more I toil, the less I move thy ruth."

† "Both," Symonds well observes, "were *uomini terribili*, to use a phrase denoting vigour of character and energy of genius, made formidable by an abrupt, uncompromising spirit." *Life*, vol. i. p. 129.

this incomparable figure. There is still more of Michael Angelo himself. The kingliness of the artist's intellect comes out of this work in a supreme degree. It is instinct with an imperious, self-conscious greatness, which is more than human. Grimm well observes: "What need we information, letters, suppositions, records respecting Michael Angelo, when we possess such a work, every line of which is a transcript of his mind?"

Worthy to be ranked with the Moses and the Captives are the colossal figures in the Medici Chapel, so marvellous in their individuality. There is nothing in ancient or modern art like those suffering superhuman creations. Florence had fallen, and it was in these statues that Michael Angelo found vent for the thoughts of which his heart was full. "He laboured at them with such energy," says Condivi, "that he accomplished them all * in a few months, urged rather by fear than by love." Fear is not the emotion which at first strikes one as being expressed by those heroes and virgins, those ineffable types of Twilight and Day. The artist, indeed, may well have feared while Medicean assassins were going from house

* "In pochi mesi fece tutte quelle statue." *Vita*, c. xliv. It seems from the next chapter that Condivi is speaking of the four statues only of Lorenzo and Giuliano, Day and Night (Le statue son quattro, &c.). Only the statues of Lorenzo and Giuliano are finished. Of the four symbolic statues those of Night and Dawn are most nearly complete.

to house, shedding, like water, the blood of the noblest citizens, and seeking his life also to take it away. And those tragic figures, in the wealth of profound subtle meaning latent in them, resemble a Psalm of David. Yes, there is a deep under-tone of fear in that divine shape of the Thinker; or, rather, all the dreads of human life, all the inexorableness of fate, rise before him as he looks far away into infinity, and in his ears is the din of greedy Acheron. These are the works in which Michael Angelo has recorded the death of the hopes so vigorous and rich in promise when he sculptured his David. They are his monument, not to the ignoble scions of the evil-hearted race whose names they bear, but to Florence, the "donna d' angelica forma"—once, in the glory of her freedom, the joy of a thousand lovers, now silent and in darkness, no more to be called "the lady of kingdoms." Heath Wilson sees in the statue of Day, half-shaped as it is from the marble, a trace of "mighty resolve and resistless power," a "prophecy, vague and obscure like all prophecies,"* of a far-off day when the city should awake from her death-like trance, and shake herself from the dust, and loose the bands of her neck, and again put on the beautiful garments of liberty. It may well be that these thoughts arose in the artist's soul as in his sadness he brooded over his work upon things to come. And thus in his verse he

* P. 392.

strengthens his brethren the Florentine exiles. Their sorrow is not as of those who have no hope. It is—so he expresses it in his noble poem—"una miseria di speranza piena." *

Let us now turn to gaze on the great work of painting of Michael Angelo's manhood—the frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Perhaps the first emotion of those who go to study them is one of horror at the barbarous maltreatment to which they have been subjected. Still, even in their ruins, they strike us with astonishment and awe. We look at that long series of solemn figures, covering the hundred and thirty-two feet of the vault; the primal mysteries of man's creation and fall are brought before us; we gaze upon the majestic prophets and mysterious sibyls, held in almost equal reverence by medieval Christianity, and at the world of mighty superhuman beings of their company, and we think, What must have been the mind of the man who has left us this record of the things which he saw "in clear dream and solemn vision" as he lay there in solitude day after day and month after month? It has been well observed by Taine, "An artist's soul bears within it a whole world, and all the soul of Michael Angelo is here." Nor is it difficult to find traces of the several influences which had lastingly impressed themselves upon that soul—of Giotto, of Ghirlandaio, of Masaccio; of Savonarola, whose

* *Madrigale*, I.

genius, Michelet truly says,* is imprinted in these frescoes; of Dante, whose "spirit aflame with patriotism, passionate for justice," † Symonds, with good reason, finds in them. I cannot, however, deem him equally happy when he seeks to see in them, too, "the philosophy of Plato," and gives sentence that "the creative God who draws Adam from the clay, and calls forth the new-born Eve in awful beauty, is the Demiurgus of the Greek." ‡ I still venture to think, as all the world had hitherto supposed, that by this awful type of plastic power, Michael Angelo intended the Almighty Father of the book of Genesis, in whom he undoubtedly believed with his whole heart, and not the Demiurgus of the *Timæus*, "working upon necessity by persuasion, but able neither to compel nor to overcome it," of whom it is very doubtful whether he had so much as heard. I do not for one moment question that Symonds was impelled by mere admiration in his endeavour thus to paganize this great work. But I entertain a strong opinion that the artist would have been more astonished than delighted if any contemporary admirer had sought thus to do him service. Unversed in what Guasti aptly terms "the wisdom

* "Savonarole vécut toujours dans la pensée de Michelange. . . . Le génie des prophètes qui fut en lui, il s'est envolé de son bûcher, fixé aux voûtes de la chapelle Sixtine," &c. Michelet, *Hist. de France*, vol. vii. p. 96.

† *Renaissance in Italy: Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 344.

‡ *Ibid.*

of a corrupted age," Michael Angelo was content to accept unquestioningly, and to teach by his art, the great verities of Christianity as they came to him in the formulæ of his hereditary creed.* And, as it seems to me, if there is any painting which simply embodies the primary religious conceptions of his age and country, it is this painting on the Sistine vault. As a matter of fact, the fresco in which Symonds discovered the Platonic Demiurgus is—Grimm has pointed this out—a development of an idea of Ghiberti.

I must not pass away from the period of Michael Angelo's manhood without noticing how austere, solitary, and laborious his life was throughout it. Condivi † tells us that he made use of food rather from necessity than for delight. Ofttimes he was satisfied with a piece of bread, which he would eat while he went on working. He slept little, and would frequently lie down with his clothes on, and rise in the night, after a few hours' repose, to go on with his labour. Of all great artists it may be said that they are not their own, they belong to their art; and in proportion to their greatness is their self-devotion. Michael Angelo lived apart, because necessity was laid upon him. But his detachment was not selfishness or moroseness. No greater mistake could be made than to

* Signor Guasti has some very judicious observations on this subject in § viii. of his *Discorso*, pp. xxxiv—xl.

† *Vita*, c. lxvi.

suppose him unkind or unfeeling. His biographers dwell upon his fondness for children, his goodness towards his old servant Urbino, his princely munificence to his acquaintance. To his brothers, notwithstanding the furious outbursts of anger and impatience which their misconduct sometimes provoked, he was ever most generous and affectionate. His tender piety towards his father is evidenced in many of his letters—perhaps in none more touchingly than in one written "in much distress and fear," to his brother, Buonarroto, in 1516, upon the occasion of the dangerous illness of old Ludovico:—

"I would by all means wish to see him again before he dies," Michael Angelo says, "even if I should die with him. . . . Arrange that nothing whatever is wanting to him needful to his soul and of the Sacraments of the Church, and let him settle what we shall do for the good of his soul.* Of the things needful for the body, see that he wants for nothing, for I have laboured but for him, to aid him in his need, before he dies. Arrange so that thy wife shall attend him lovingly; I will restore to all of you whatever is required."

But truly as he loved his family he could have had little in common with them. None of his relatives shared his home, nor did any woman's face brighten it. He dwelt alone, "wedded," as he was wont to say, "to his art, a wife who was too much for him." † No call less imperious than

* *I.e.*, after his decease.

† "Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte, che m' ha fatto sempre tribolare," &c.

that of the last effort of his country to maintain her liberties, availed to draw him from the exclusiveness of his solitude. It was, indeed, the artist as much as the patriot that fought in Michael Angelo. He knew well that the cause of art and liberty is the same; that the yoke sought to be laid upon his country was one "under whose inquisitorial and tyrannical dunsery no free and splendid wit can flourish." And even then, amid the din of arms and the horror of famine and pestilence, he would steal secretly at night to work on his Medicean monuments. It was in beleaguered Florence, too, that he took up his brush again after twenty years' disuse, to paint his Leda, that wonderful picture, tragic, heroic, colossal; now known to us only from copies and engravings, and the cartoon in the Royal Academy —for the original has perished—in which the mystic substance of the old legend is expressed as neither poet nor artist has expressed it before or since. That Michael Angelo could paint such a picture at such a time is a striking evidence how really great he was :—

"Fortis et in se ipso totus teres atque rotundus,
In quem manca ruit semper Fortuna."

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IV.

And now Fortune was to "turn her wheel." Michael Angelo's sixtieth year, from which we may date the last period in his life, is memorable, not only for his appointment to an honourable office by the Pope in recognition of his artistic supremacy, but also for the beginning of that "pure and most sweet friendship," as Condivi speaks, which for eleven years was to illuminate his austere and lonely life with a brightness not of this world. It was probably early in 1536 that he first met the childless widow of Ferdinand Davolos, Marquis of Pescara—Victoria Colonna, the most gifted and illustrious woman of her age, and still in the maturity of her beauty. He has himself recorded in his verse, how "that happy spirit renovated and raised him who was almost numbered with the dead." * No one ever so entered into the inner sanctuary of his thoughts, or was so helpful to him: "A great friend," he says, writing of her some three years after her death, "who wished me the greatest good, and I not less to her." † We know from Condivi how he mourned her, how oftentimes he was "overcome as if bereft of reason"—"sbigotito e come insensato"—at the remembrance of her. And we have four Sonnets

* See especially *Sonetto* xii.

† Quoted in Guasti's *Discorso*, p. xxiv.

of his—every line of them as a tear of immortals —in which he describes what she was to him, what her loss is. Other friends he had, some of the noblest and best in Rome—Contarini, Maffeo, Ridolfi, and our own Reginald Pole. And his last years were cheered by the bright, youthful devotion of Tommaso de' Cavalieri. But Victoria Colonna's place was never filled.

It is strangely significant that the years which the friendship of this noble woman made the brightest in Michael Angelo's life, should have produced the most terrible of all his works. His Last Judgment, in the Sistine Chapel, was begun in 1535 and finished in 1541. This painting was judged by his contemporaries his greatest. The general verdict of the present day is other. The question is, perhaps, a somewhat idle one. Without expressing any opinion upon it, I may be allowed, in passing, to lament how little it seems to be understood that in order to judge sanely of a work of art, these two conditions are of primary necessity: a certain amount of æsthetic cultivation, and a correct appreciation of the artist's end. The perception of beauty does not come by nature. It is even more difficult than the perception of goodness or of truth. The eye requires education, as much as the voice, in order to attain high excellence: the eye, or rather that æsthetic sense of which the eye is the organ; and the higher the art is, the higher

the education required to understand it. "The grand style," observes Sir Joshua Reynolds, "is artificial in the highest degree; it pre-supposes in the spectator a cultivated and prepared artificial state of mind."* But it is certain that in our own days of incontinence of words, the great majority of those who favour the world with "art criticisms" possess no such cultivation. Superficial observers, they see superficial faults, or what they imagine to be faults. The high powers beneath escape them. Nor, apart from the matter of æsthetic cultivation, can it be admitted that the claim of very small men to judge summarily of very great ones, carries with it its own sanction. The works of an illustrious master are to be approached, not indeed in the spirit of blind and indiscriminate admiration, not with an abiding readiness to "wonder with a foolish face of praise;" but, surely, with diffidence, with modesty, with a feeling that, at all events, the presumption is in favour of the master being in the right.

Again, the object which the artist had in view ought to be carefully ascertained and kept in mind. Ruskin, in a passage worthy of being deeply pondered (he uses the words, indeed, in another connection), divides artists as searchers after truth into three classes: the first taking the good, and leaving the evil, the last perceiving

* *Fifteenth Discourse.*

evil only, while "the second or greatest class render all that they see . . . unhesitatingly, with a kind of divine grasp and government of the whole: sympathising with all the good, and yet confessing, permitting, and bringing good out of, the evil also."* Foremost in this greatest class he places Michael Angelo. And with reason, for Michael Angelo's prime characteristic is absolute veracity. Not beauty in any lower sense than the beauty of truth is the object at which he aims, and pain oftener than pleasure is the feeling produced in us by his attainment of it. His supreme accuracy is, indeed, at times almost intolerable, as in his expression of the human form in the Last Judgment. But such accuracy was the object at which he aimed—not the gratification of the senses nor the titillation of the fancy.

And here is the principle on which many of the criticisms directed against this great work are rightly met. Thus Duppa objects that in it Michael Angelo "adopted the unphilosophical notions of the darker ages." † The answer is that to Michael Angelo those "unphilosophical notions" were tremendous verities, which he depicted as his inner eye saw them. It is the most baseless of fancies to conceive of him as going "beyond the ecclesiastical standing-ground, and

* *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 187. Ruskin is speaking of "naturalism," the pursuit of external truth.

† *Life and Literary Works of Michael Angelo*, p. 197.

reaching one where philosophy includes the Christian faith." * The secret of the terror of the Last Judgment is that no shadow of doubt rested upon the artist's mind as to the tenableness of that ecclesiastical standing-ground: that he intensely believed in what he painted. The things which he set down above the altar of the Sistine were as real to him as they were to Dante, whole passages of whose *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* he has embodied. His fresco is the translation into visible form of the solemn hymn, used with such awful impressiveness by the Catholic Church in masses for the dead, and so doubtless very familiar to him, of which it has been well said that "every word is as a peal of thunder." † Here is, indeed, the *Dies Iræ* of which Psalmist and Sibyl testified, that "day of calamity and misery," that "great and exceeding bitter day" with all its terrors: the trump of the Archangel sending its dread blast through the sepulchres, and compelling all before the Throne; the book opened and the works inquired into; the hidden things of darkness brought to light, nought escaping the recompense it has earned. The Saviour of Men is lost in the "Rex tremendæ majestatis," the "justus Judex ultionis": Mary ceases to intercede: the Martyrs point to the tokens and instruments of their

* As in Symonds's *Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 346.

† "Cujus quot sunt verba, tot tonitrua." Daniel. *Thes. Hymnol.* vol. ii. p. 103.

passion, but to enhance the confusion of their murderers. Even the just is scarcely secure; for the wicked, there are the pitiless demons, the unquenchable flame, the indissoluble chain. It is the outcome of the tradition of fifteen centuries. The painter turns away from "the blind world" where "evil triumphs over virtue," where "light and courage are quenched," where "lies reign and truth dares not show his face," * and sets down in this stupendous production his vision of the ultimate retribution.

Michael Angelo had almost attained his sixty-seventh year when he completed the Last Judgment, but he had still enough energy to undertake another great work of painting in the frescoes of the Pauline chapel—grand and severe compositions, presenting no trace of old age except perhaps in the execution of details. In 1547 he was appointed architect of St. Peter's, an office which he preferred to hold without salary, devoting himself to it, and to the conflicts with stupidity and dishonesty which it entailed, "pro salute animæ." A model made by him still exists—the last work of his aged hands—which shows the Church as he conceived of it. Unhappily his design was

* "Il mondo è cieco, e 'l tristo esempio ancora
Vince e sommerge ogni perfetta usanza;
Spent' è la luce, e seco ogni baldanza;
Trionfa il falso, e 'l ver non surge fora."

Sonetto lxix.

subsequently departed from, to the irreparable loss of the building. But the unrivalled cupola, too far advanced before his death to admit of material alteration by his successors, is no unworthy monument of his pious labour. Among the other architectural works of his old age are the Farnese Palace, the cornice of which is judged by many to be the "grandest architectural feature of modern Rome," and the stately edifices crowning the Capitoline Hill, which assumed their present form from his designs. But of higher interest still are the Church and Carthusian Convent of St. Mary of the Angels on the Viminal. The Church is in fact the *calidarium* of the Baths of Diocletian, "a vast hall with red Egyptian granite monolithic columns, adapted by Michael Angelo for Catholic worship." "Nothing exists," writes Heath Wilson, "which excels the plan of this Church in beauty and variety of form. . . . The eye is delighted by the evidence, on all sides, of imagination, taste, and skill." Unfortunately, like so many other of the chief Christian monuments of Rome, it suffered grievous things in the reign of Benedict XIV., that learned and pious Pontiff, the most considerable figure among the Popes since Sixtus V., whose very learning and piety were perverted by the taste of the age into the service of destruction. But the great cloister still remains in all the grand simplicity of Michael Angelo's design: a vast quadrangle, surrounded

with a hundred white and slender columns, upon which rests arches of inexpressibly graceful curve, supporting a range of monastic cells covered with pale red tiles. In the centre is a fountain, low murmuring, clear, and placid, lending to the scene perennial freshness and a deeper calm. Four mighty cypresses overshadow it: touching memorials, fitting types of the great master who in his green old age planted them: an old age of unwithered leaf and seasonable fruit, to the last.

Among the most precious of the productions of Michael Angelo's last years, must be reckoned his Sonnets, most of which were written when he was past seventy. Frederick von Schlegel, half a century ago, recorded the judgment, that "these compositions do not fulfil the anticipations of the lofty, bold originality to which Michael Angelo's name gives birth." But Frederick von Schlegel had not Michael Angelo's genuine text before him. His criticism was directed to the *rifacimento*,* the editor of which had done his best to remove or veil whatever was most characteristic of the great author. His success was indeed only partial. Even in the *rifacimento* one finds "disjecti membra poetæ"—profound and striking thoughts scattered among shallow and commonplace lines. Wordsworth, who also, of course, had only the *rifacimento*, judged more truly that Schlegel. He

* First published in 1623 by Michael Angelo the younger, a far-off kinsman of his great namesake.

writes: "So much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable."*

More fortunate than these illustrious critics, we now possess the original text of Michael Angelo's poems, in Guasti's volume, well described by Symonds as "a masterpiece of laborious and minute scholarship." It is from Signor Guasti's text that Symonds has executed his English version, essaying, not without a considerable measure of success, the task which Wordsworth thought so arduous, and which must have been more arduous still in respect of Michael Angelo's authentic compositions. An unlearned man, the poet knew little of the laws of metre or even of grammar. His verses are therefore technically faulty, unpolished, and rude: "the rough-hewn blockings out of poems," Symonds well says, "rather than finished works of art." † But, like everything that he produced, they bear the impress of his peculiar power. Every word has a true meaning and stands as the symbol of a thought. "Ei dice cose," says Berni, and so it is. In his verses, as in his sculpture and his painting, he

* See his note to his English version of some Sonnets of Michael Angelo.

† Symonds, *Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella*, int. p. vi.

seizes the very essence of the thing and presents it in its living reality.

Guasti, in the very valuable discourse which he has prefixed to his edition, remarks that Love and Art, Religion and Country, are the arguments of Michael Angelo's poetry, the first two ideas blending into the idea of Beauty, the last two into the idea of Virtue. This is undoubtedly true, but perhaps it would be even truer to say that Beauty * was the supreme object of desire to Michael Angelo's artist-soul, and that his conception of beauty was the highest. Like St. Augustine, from examining † whence it is that he admires the beauty of bodies celestial or terrestrial, whence that he forms true judgments on mutable things, he reaches up to "That which Is," the uncreated Beauty, the absolute Truth—"the Truth who is Eternity, the Love who is Truth, the Eternity who is Love." ‡ "Comeliness of the body, the fair harmony of time, the brightness of the light, so gladdening to these eyes, sweet melodies of every kind, perfumes of flowers and ointments and spices, manna and honey, the delectableness of lovely

* So Condivi: "He loved not only the beauty of human beings, but, in general, all fair things: a beautiful horse, a beautiful dog, a beautiful piece of country, a beautiful plant, a beautiful mountain, a beautiful wood, and every site or thing of its kind, fair and rare, admiring them with marvellous affection. This was his way: to choose what is beautiful from Nature, as bees collect honey from flowers," &c., c. lxv.

† *Confess.* l. vii. c. x. ‡ *Ibid.* l. vii. c. x.

limbs," are to him, as to the greatest of the Latin fathers, but the dim shadows, the faint emanations of the Creator, whom they proclaim, and to whom they lead.*

This is the faith that was in Michael Angelo, and nowhere has this cast of thought found more characteristic expression than in the following Sonnet, Symonds's translation of which I give side by side with the original † : —

"Veggio nel tuo bel viso, signior mio,
Quel che narrar mal puossi in questa vita ;
L'anima, della carne ancor vestita,
Con esso è già più volte asciesa a Dio.
E se 'l vulgo malvagio isciocco e rio
Di quel che sente, altrui segnia e addita ;
Non è l' intensa voglia men gradita,
L'amor, la fede e l'onesto desio.

A quel pietoso fonte, onde siàn tutti
S' assembra ogni beltà che qua si vede,
Più c' altra cosa, alle persone accorte ;
Ne altro saggio abbiàn nè altri frutti
Del cielo in terra : e s' i' v' amo con fede,
Trascendo a Dio, e fo dolce la morte." ‡

"From thy fair face I learn, O my loved lord,
That which no mortal tongue can rightly say ;
The soul, imprisoned in her house of clay,
Holpen by thee, to God hath often soared ;
And though the vulgar, vain, malignant horde
Attribute what their grosser wills obey,
Yet shall this fervent homage that I pay,
This love, this faith, pure joys for us afford.
Lo, all the lovely things we find on earth
Resemble, for the soul that rightly sees,
That source of bliss divine which gave us birth :
Nor have we first fruits or remembrances
Of heaven elsewhere. Thus, loving loyally,
I rise to God and make death sweet by thee."

* *Ibid.*, l. x. c. vi.

† Symonds appropriately heads his translation "Love lifts to God."

‡ It might be thought from the English version that in the twelfth line there is a reference to the doctrine of *anamnesis*. But this is not so. The word "saggio" cannot possibly bear

The sentiment of this poem is identical with that which I have cited from St. Augustine.* The last line is peculiarly significant. The thought of death is in constant recurrence in Michael Angelo's verses. It comes, not, as in the poets of antiquity, to excite to the enjoyment of the passing hour, but to chasten, to tranquillize, to subdue. Michael Angelo held it to be "the only thought which makes us know ourselves, and saves us from becoming a prey" (so he expresses it, with characteristic earnestness) "to kindred, or friends, or masters, to ambition, avarice, and other vices and sins which rob a man of himself." † To this self-dissipation he thought himself to be more

the meaning of "remembrances," but must be translated, example, specimen, or—what will suit the verse—experience. I am, of course, aware that there are a few passages in which Michael Angelo may fairly be considered to have had the Platonic notion of Reminiscence more or less clearly before his mind. But surely it was for him, as Guasti judiciously observes, mere "un' immaginazione ben acconcia a poesia." To take literally, "a poet soaring in the high reason of his fancies," and to conclude, as Pater does, from one of these passages (see *Studies in the Hist. of the Renaissance*, p. 76), that "he thus accounts for love at first sight," as though "a previous state of existence" were a settled article of belief with him, is somewhat full-flavoured doctrinairism.

* See p. 90.

† It is thus that Michael Angelo expresses himself in Giannotti's dialogue, as quoted by Signor Guasti in his *Discorso*, p. xxxi. :—"Bisogna pensare alla morte. Questo pensiero è solo quello che si fa riconoscere noi medesimi, che ci mantiene in noi uniti, senza lasciarci rubare a' parenti, agli amici, a' gran maestri, all' ambizione, all' avarizia, e agli altri vicii e peccati che l' uomo all' uomo rubano e lo tengono disperso

inclined naturally than any one.* His artist soul was sensible above measure to the fascination of delightful things. "Born for art," he tells us in one of his Sonnets, "neither deaf nor blind," but with perceptions of beauty exquisitely keen, it was with him as though "a heart of sulphur" had been joined to "flesh of tow and bones of dry wood." † One spark was enough to kindle the flames of earthly desire. And in the recollection of death was his only remedy—

> "Non trovo altro soccorso
> Che l' imagin sua ferma in mezzo il core
> Chè dove è morte non s' appressa amore." ‡

Thus was he penetrated with stern ascetic spiritualism. He had in him the stuff of which a St. Bruno or a St. Romuald might have been made. There is a passage in a letter of his addressed to Vasari in 1556, expressive of his admiration of the lives of solitary ascetics. He had set out on a pilgrimage to Loretto, but was obliged to stop

e dissipato, senza mai lassarlo ritrovarsi e riunirsi. Ed è maraviglioso l' effetto di questo pensiero della morte; il quale, distruggendo ella per natura sua tutte le cose, conserva e mantiene coloro che a lei pensano, e da tutte l' umane passioni li difende."

* "Io sono il più inclinato uomo all' amare le persone, che mai in alcun tempo nascesse. Qualunche volta io veggio alcuno, che abbia qualche virtù . . . io sono constretto ad innamorarmi di lui, e me gli do in maniera in preda, che io non sono più mio, ma tutto suo." *Ibid.*

† *Sonetto* xviii. ‡ *Madrigale* xvi.

short at Spoleto, where he visited the hermits, whose cells were in the forests of the neighbouring mountains. On returning to Rome he writes: "I had great pleasure in visiting those hermits. Only a part of me returned to Rome. Of a truth, peaceful existence dwells in those woods."* This longing for peace comes out very conspicuously in some of the Sonnets referable to the latest years of his life. In one of them he likens himself to a frail bark, at last nearing a tranquil harbour after fierce storms.† Another, which opens with a similar image, I will quote in its entirety, with Symonds's excellent English version :—

"Giunto è già 'l corso della vita mia,
Con tempestoso mar per fragil barca,
Al comun porto, ov' a render si varca
Conto e ragion d' ogn' opra trista e pia.

"Now hath my life across a stormy sea
Like a frail bark reached that wide port where all
Are bidden, ere the final reckoning fall
Of good and evil for eternity.

* Heath Wilson, p. 523. One is reminded of the lines of Milton :—

"And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell."

Grimm, with curious infelicity, speaks of this journey into the mountains as "the first expedition Michael Angelo made in search of nature" (vol. ii. p. 487). It is one of many examples which might be given of this learned man's transference of the sentiments of his own age to Buonarroti's; and it is the less excusable because Michael Angelo himself says that he went to see the hermits—not "nature."

† *Sonetto* lxxiii.

Onde l' affettuosa fantasia,
Che l'arte mi fece idol' e monarca,
Conosco or ben quant' era d' error carca,
E quel ch' a mal suo grado ogn' uom desia.
Gli amorosi pensier, già vani e lieti
Che fieno or, s' a duo morte m' avvicino?
D' una so 'l certo, e l' altra mi minaccia.
Nè pinger nè scolpir fia più che quieti
L' anima volta a quell' Amor divino
Ch' aperse, a prender noi, in croce le braccia."

Now know I well how that fond phantasy,
Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall
Of earthly art, is vain; how criminal
Is that which all men seek unwillingly.
Those amorous thoughts, which were so lightly dressed,
What are they when the double death is nigh?
The one I know for sure, the other dread.
Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
My soul that turns to His great love on high,
Whose arms, to clasp us, on the cross were spread."

The thought with which this Sonnet concludes was with him to the end. Just before sunset on the day on which he passed away, we are told, he turned to his friends and said, "When you come to die, remember the Passion of Jesus Christ."* They were his last words.

V.

Such was the great man in whom, as Symonds truly says, "the genius of the Renaissance culminated,"† whom he describes as "the Prophet or Seer of the Renaissance."‡ I think the description happy. The seer is the man whose eyes are opened to discern things hidden from the mass of men. And the seer is a prophet, too—his

* Vasari, *Vite*, &c., vol. xii. p. 267.
† *Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 342. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

mission to speak that he knows, to testify that he has seen, to a world which neither sees nor knows. It was a remark of Victoria Colonna, "Those who admire Michael Angelo's works, admire but the smallest part of him." The merely technical spectator, or æsthetic critic, misses their highest lessons. Supreme examples of the power of the arts of design to convey thought, they are fraught with teaching which such as can receive it will never tire of pondering: teaching which we apprehend but dimly and in rudiment at first, and learn more perfectly as the years pass away, and our inner eye is purged by the sad experiences of life, and our judgment matured by its stern discipline. They are revelations, as in broken words and half sentences of the language of the gods,* by one of their own offspring—"the divine master," his countrymen love to call him; and rightly, for his "soul was like a star, and dwelt apart."

Yes; his soul was like a star and dwelt apart. And I must end this chapter by a word of protest against some critics who have attempted to drag him down from that serene sphere to the dreary region of sectarian strife and controversy. There are those who represent him as a crypto-Lutheran, and who, in so doing, found

* It is a remark of Sir Joshua Reynolds, "The style of Michael Angelo may . . . poetically speaking, be called the language of the gods" (*Fifteenth Discourse*).

themselves on most shadowy and indeed grotesque reasons. Grimm, for example, from the fact that in his verses upon the death of his father Ludovico, he makes no mention of purgatory, infers that he did not believe in it,* as though Catholics, in their memorial and mortuary compositions, were accustomed to dwell upon the possible sufferings of their friends in the place of penal purification. Again, from a letter in which he takes comfort from the thought that, although his brother Giovansimone, recently deceased, did not receive all the Sacraments of the Church, yet, if he showed good contrition (*buona contritione*) it is enough for his soul's welfare, Grimm draws the conclusion that "Buonarroti adhered little to ecclesiastical rule." † Further research in the British Museum, where this letter was found, would have revealed to Grimm another—an earlier one ‡—which would have saved him from such a mistake. In it Michael Angelo expresses to his nephew Leonardo what a great consolation it would be to him to know how his brother died; "whether he had confessed and communicated, and done all that the Church requires." And if Grimm had taken the trouble to consult the simplest manual of Catholic doctrine he would have learnt that

* *Leben Michelangelo's*, vol. ii. p. 339. † *Ibid.*

‡ It has been published by Milanesi. An extract from it is given by Heath Wilson at p. 497 of his work.

"*buona contritione*" is held sufficient when the Sacraments cannot be had.

Harford does not come short of Grimm in the wildness of his expedients to find symptoms of Protestantism in Michael Angelo. In the first place, more lynx-eyed than the Inquisition, and of keener theological susceptibilities than St. Philip Neri,* he detects heterodoxy in Savonarola,† by whose teaching the seeds of religion and virtue were implanted in the youthful Buonarroti's mind. Secondly, he asserts that Michael Angelo learnt from Victoria Colonna the Lutheran doctrine on justification, and has expressed it in the series of Sonnets written towards the close of his life.‡ In truth, there is no more trace in these Sonnets

* The devotion of St. Philip Neri to Savonarola is well known. As to his solicitude when the question of the condemnation of Savonarola's teaching was under consideration, see Bacci's *Vita di San Filippo Neri*, lib. iii. c. i.

† *Life of Michael Angelo*, vol. i. c. viii., part 2.

‡ *Life*, vol. ii. p. 159. Symonds writes more cautiously: "It is obvious that Vittoria's religion was of an evangelical type, inconsistent with the dogmas developed by the Tridentine Council. . . . In all these matters, Michael Angelo, the devout student of the Bible, and the disciple of Savonarola, shared Vittoria's sentiments." (*Life of Michael Angelo*, vol. ii. p. 96.) It is a common practice to assert that a thing is "obvious" for which there is not a shadow of proof. And one would like to know what Symonds meant by "evangelical." The word, in its proper sense, is strictly applicable to Victoria Colonna's religion and to Michael Angelo's. In the cant or sectarian sense, it is wholly inapplicable. One would like to know, too, the extent of Symonds's acquaintance with the Tridentine

of Lutheranism than of Mohammedanism. Nor is there a scintilla of evidence that Victoria Colonna inclined to the opinion of Luther on justification or on any other matter. As Heath Wilson observes, her own letters sufficiently show her faith in the Church as "the ark which saves and gives security"; "and there is nothing in the life and sayings of Michael Angelo to show that this was not his faith also."* But there is a great deal of evidence which goes far beyond this merely negative assertion. It is abundantly clear from the works of Condivi and Vasari that the great doctrines of the Catholic faith entered into Michael Angelo's life as simply, naturally, and unquestioned as the common truths of physical nature, or the most elementary principles of civil society. Occupied with the duties which lay nearest to him in the pursuit of his art, Michael Angelo dwelt in a sphere far removed from the din of theological controversies and the jangling of religious innovators, diligently seeking—

> "Those helps, for his occasions ever near
> Who lacks not will to use them,"

which the devotional practices of his age and country offered; not neglectful of works of

decrees. I chance to be tolerably familiar with them, and I venture to assert that not one of them would have presented any difficulty to Victoria Colonna or Michael Angelo.

* P. 401.

charity and piety; ever watchfully guarding his own heart; and thus winning the victory—

> "most sure
> For him who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
> To yield entire submission to the law
> Of conscience—conscience reverenced and obeyed,
> As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
> And His most perfect image in the world."

Again: there are writers who claim Michael Angelo as a disciple of the esoteric doctrine which sought to engraft on Catholicism the speculations borrowed by Lorenzo de' Medici's *literati* from Plato, and still more from the neo-Platonists. To these Symonds sometimes joined himself. Michael Angelo, he tells us,* "clung to Ficino's dream of Platonizing Christianity,"* an assertion based, apparently, upon the Platonic *concetti* found in the Sonnets. It should be remembered, however, that it was the universal fashion—and it was, for the most part, only a fashion—for verse writers of that day to employ such *concetti*. The poetry of the sixteenth century teems with them, one of the most conspicuous instances being supplied by our own Spenser, who certainly clung to no dream of Platonizing Christianity.

Any acquaintance which Michael Angelo possessed with the Platonic or neo-Platonic system of philosophy must have been very slight and

* *The Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella*, int., p. 2.

superficial, and we must have recourse to a very different source for an explanation of the difficulties of his muse.* The conception of Truth, Beauty, and Justice, as but aspects of the Supreme Good, which is God; the doctrine of the purely negative existence of Evil; the recognition, in the external world cognizable by the senses, of the art of the Supreme Artificer; the cult of Beauty as the most vivid image of Truth; the view of Love as the longing of the soul for Beauty: a longing which is the seed of virtue or of sin, according as the object which it chooses is the higher or the lower; the scorn of mere sexual love as an animal appetite, and the exaltation of intellectual as the refiner's fire, through which the soul must pass if all the dross of earth is to be purged away—all these, and many like notions, which are the leading ideas of Michael Angelo's poetry, often vaguely and obscurely expressed, may be found in Dante "writ large," and duly formulated. And the two writers who most largely influenced Dante were Boëthius and St. Augustine: Boëthius, whose *De Consolatione* is simply an exposition of the leading doctrines of Plato, cast into the mould of Christian faith; and St. Augustine who, as Neander justly remarks, "like Origen, obtained

* It is a remark of Mr. J. E. Taylor, in his learned and thoughtful essay on *Michael Angelo considered as a Philosophic Poet* (p. 99), "The comments which Dante has given" (viz., in the *Convito*) "to explain the mysteries of his muse will unlock the difficulties of that of Michael Angelo."

his scientific discipline from Platonism, in whose speculative intellect the philosophical interest and element unconsciously mixed in with the Christian and theological," and "from whom this mixture of elements was transmitted to the scholastic philosophy, which stood in immediate connection with his own." * There is as much and as little reason for attributing Platonism to Michael Angelo, as to the most distinctively Christian of poets, and the schoolmen whose teaching he popularized, to the martyred apologist of Catholic orthodoxy against the Arians, and to the great Latin Father who did most to shape the theology of the Western Church. They all belong to what Emerson describes as "a very well marked class of souls, namely, those who delight in giving a spiritual, that is, an ethico-intellectual expression to every truth, by exhibiting an ulterior end which is yet legitimate to it." † That is the sum of Michael Angelo's Platonism.

* Neander's *Church Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 502.
† *Works*, vol. i. p. 310 (Bohn's ed.).

CHAPTER III.

ERASMUS—THE MAN OF LETTERS.

I.

I TAKE Desiderius Erasmus as the Renaissance Type of the Man of Letters. The new culture introduced into Europe by that great movement is better represented by him than by any one else. There have been, perhaps, only two other men of letters, during the Christian era, whose influence can be paralleled with his: two who, like him, lived and worked in periods of transition; who, like him, furnish in their writings, and especially in their correspondence, a most vivid image of their times; who, like him, with small prescience of the destined course of events, were singularly potent instruments in moulding the minds of the generations to come after them. It was the function of St. Augustine to sum up in himself the chief characteristics of the vast spiritual and intellectual changes that accompanied the dissolution of the Roman Empire. He it was, more than any one else, who impressed upon

public and private life that ecclesiastical form which it was to wear until the Middle Ages had run their course. In Voltaire we have the living embodiment of the spirit of doubt and denial which sapped the foundations whereon European society rested in his age. He was the chief prophet of that vast Revolution which he did not live to see, which he did not anticipate: a Revolution which has made all things new for us in this twentieth century. Erasmus, in his day and generation, played a part hardly less important than that which St. Augustine or Voltaire played in theirs. "The whole literary and religious Renaissance of Western Europe in the sixteenth century converged towards him." * From all parts men turned to him to interpret for them ideas, presentiments, desires of which they were dimly conscious, but which they could not formulate; to guide them in their exodus from the outworn medieval order to an ampler stage of civilization. We, too, may, with advantage, turn to him for light upon his epoch. M. Émile Amiel truly remarks, "Even now, after all the books which have been written about him—and God knows there are enough of them—the last word about Erasmus has not been said." † I am far from supposing that I shall say that last word in this chapter. But I hope to say something which

* Nisard, *Renaissance et Réforme*, vol. i. p. 140.

† *Un Libre-Penseur du XVI^me^ Siècle*, p. 416.

shall present at least the outlines of the true character and work of this man of light and leading, so long obscured by religious passion and theological prejudice.

It will be well, perhaps, if, by way of introduction to what I am about to write, I make a few remarks concerning some of the more important of the recent additions to the Erasmian literature, the bulk of which so oppressed M. Amiel. First, I may mention the admirable sketch which we owe to M. Nisard. Its singular value was at once recognized by all competent judges when it originally appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1836. And its author has had the well-merited satisfaction of telling us, in the preface to the last edition, that the works which have appeared on the subject, since he wrote, have served to corroborate the general correctness of his judgments. The longer study which we owe to the labour of M. Feugère appears to have been designed, in some sort, as a supplement and corollary to M. Nisard's brilliant essay. Nothing can be more excellent than the spirit in which this accomplished scholar addressed himself to his task: "To place oneself directly before Erasmus, to draw from his correspondence a faithful picture of his life, to attempt a critical classification of his works, to gather the flower of them in order to make them better known and appreciated." *

* *Érasme : Étude sur sa Vie et ses Ouvrages*, préface, p. xi.

M. Feugère has, of course, his own philosophical and religious opinions. He does not conceal them, although he does not obtrude them. But sincerity, good faith, and tolerance are written on every page of his work, which well merits the "coronation" it received from the French Academy. M. Durand de Laur, in his two large volumes, follows the same lines as M. Feugère, not less conscientiously, if with less literary ability. "In order to know Erasmus," the author tells us, "we have questioned him: to make him known, we have left him to speak for himself, effacing ourselves as much as possible."* The vast amount of material which M. Durand de Laur has brought together is carefully and impartially selected, and is skilfully and commodiously arranged. M. Amiel's small book contains many excellent reflections, and is particularly happy in repelling certain unjust criticisms into which Adolph Müller,† notwithstanding his learning and industry, was betrayed by regarding Erasmus from the narrow standpoint of German pietism. But M. Amiel himself is by no means free from prejudices and prepossessions of another—an anti-pietistic—kind. Indeed, the very title of his volume, *Un Libre-Penseur du XVI^me^ Siècle*, is sufficient to raise a presumption against it. Erasmus is not a man who can be thus ticketed

* *Erasme, Précurseur et Initiateur de l'Esprit Moderne*, p. iv.

† In his *Leben des Erasmus von Rotterdam.*

and disposed of. It is only just to say, however, that the work is better than its title leads us to expect. But, assuredly, M. Amiel imagines a vain thing when he supposes that the object of Erasmus's religious faith was the "Dieu des bonnes gens" invoked by Béranger, or the shadowy Deity of Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar.* M. de Nolhac's *brochure* † is especially valuable as throwing fresh light on the two years which Erasmus spent in Italy—years which, as I shall hereafter have occasion to observe, were of especial importance in his intellectual development.

To a Cambridge scholar, worthily sustaining in his University the traditions of Bentley and Porson, we are indebted for an admirable monograph on the great Humanist who, for a brief period, was numbered among its professors. To say that Sir Richard Jebb's Rede Lecture is worthy both of its author and of its subject is to pay it the highest tribute which can be bestowed. Of the volume on the *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, given to the world by the late Mr. J. A. Froude, I cannot so speak. I can only say that it is worthy of its author. There are few writers of this age who have exhibited greater literary power than the late Mr. Froude. There are fewer who have made proof of worse judgment, or of more defective scholarship. His Lectures on Erasmus have all the merits and all the demerits of his other works.

* See p. 446. † *Érasme en Italie.*

His descriptions are most happy. His portraits are most life-like. His summaries are most brilliant. He abounds in sage sayings, in racy reflections, in caustic criticisms. But of that judicial mind, that breadth of view, that philosophic moderation, which are essential characteristics of a great historian, his pages present no trace. He is everywhere an advocate, and not a specially scrupulous advocate. It was part of his excellent design to illustrate his theme with extracts from the letters of Erasmus. And as these are much too long for full quotation in his Lectures, he very properly set himself to abridge, compress, and epitomise them. The result is pre-eminently readable. Nowhere has he more felicitously displayed his rare literary skill. But nowhere has he more infelicitously displayed the inaccuracy (if that is the proper word), happily no less rare, which was ever his besetting sin. The meaning of the Latin is constantly missed. Qualifying words are usually ignored. Sometimes things are attributed to Erasmus directly opposite to what he really wrote: sometimes things of which the original presents no trace at all. Froude appears to have regarded the text of his author as so much raw material which he might manipulate at pleasure. This is what his abridging, compressing, epitomising practically means. He observes in his preface: "My object has been

rather to lead historical students to a study of Erasmus's own writings than to provide an abbreviated substitute for them." Historical students most certainly should follow the course thus recommended to them by the late Professor. And in order to enforce the advice, I shall from time to time indicate by instances that come in my way how untrustworthy his "abbreviated substitute" is. It must not be supposed, however, that these are selected specimens of Froude's mistakes. They are merely casual samples of his errors—"thick as dust in vacant chambers," I may say, for there is scarcely a page free from them.

II.

And now, making special use of these seven works at which I have just glanced, while not neglecting other Erasmian literature, and ever keeping before me the text of Erasmus himself,* I will proceed with the task I have undertaken. But first let us survey briefly the age into which Erasmus was born. And I do not know who has given us a better bird's-eye view of it than Nisard. "Picture to yourself," he says—in an admirably descriptive passage which I must give in his own fascinating French, for no translation could do it justice—"picture to yourself—

* I use the Leyden edition (1703–1706) in ten folio volumes.

"cette Europe de la fin du xv^e^ siècle et des premières années du xvi^e^, labourée par la guerre, décimée par la peste, où toutes les nationalités de l'Europe intermédiaire s'agitent et cherchent leur assiette sous l'unité apparente de la monarchie universelle de l'Espagne : où l'on voit d'un même coup d'œil des querelles religieuses et des batailles, une mêlée inouïe des hommes et des choses, une religion naissante en lutte de violence avec la religion établie, l'ignorance de l'Europe occidentale se débattant contre la lumière de l'Italie : l'antiquité qui sort de son tombeau, les langues mortes qui renaissent, la grande tradition littéraire qui vient rendre le sens des choses de l'esprit à des intelligences pervertis par les raffinements de la dialectique religieuse : du fracas partout, du silence nulle part : les hommes vivant comme des pélerins, et cherchant leur patrie çà et là, le baton de voyage à la main : une république littéraire et chrétienne de tous les esprits élevés, réunis par le langue latine, cette langue qui faisait encore toutes les grandes affaires de l'Europe à cette époque ; d'épouvantables barbaries à côté d'une précoce élégance des mœurs : une immense mêlée militaire, religieuse, philosophique, monacale ; enfin—car j'ai hâte de quitter cette prétention à resumer une époque dont Dieu seul a le sens—aucun lieu tranquille, nulle solitude en Europe où un homme pût se recueillir et se sentir vivre." *

Such is the abstract and brief chronicle of the time of Erasmus. His career in it seems to fall into four well-marked divisions, which we may term respectively the spring, summer, autumn, and winter of his intellectual life. The first extends from his birth in 1467 to his visit to England in 1497 or 1498—a protracted and inclement spring. In these thirty years of unremitting toil and unbroken trouble was sown the

* *Renaissance et Réforme*, vol. i. p. 44.

seed of light which was to blossom so luxuriantly in the second period, closing with his return from Italy in 1509. In the next ten years we see him gathering in the fruit of his labours, reaping an abundant harvest of fame and influence throughout Europe. From 1520, when Luther's revolt opens a new chapter in the world's religious history, he falls gradually into "the sere, the yellow leaf." It is a time of blighted hopes, of decaying influence, of withered reputation: and "the winter of his discontent"—if I may borrow another phrase from Shakespeare—grows sadder and gloomier until his death in 1536.

Erasmus's start in life was marred by "his birth's invidious bar." The romantic story of Gerhard de Praet and Margaret Brandt is tolerably well known, and supplied a theme for the pen of a versatile novelist, in his still so popular work, *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Charles Reade, however, possibly out of consideration for the feelings of the British public, thought well to represent these lovers as secretly married. And Froude, whose motive I cannot even conjecture, hints that they perhaps were so.* As a matter of fact, however, there is no ground for disbelieving the story current from the time of Erasmus to our own, that the union of his parents was not hallowed by matrimony, and that he was the illegitimate fruit of it. His father was a man

* P. 2.

of good reputation and of unusual ability; a fair Latin and Greek scholar and well versed in jurisprudence. His mother, save for her one fault, was "of honest manners and of edifying life." They had wished to marry. The obstacle was that Gerhard's parents, anxious that he should enter the ecclesiastical state, refused their consent. Gerhard, therefore, Erasmus tells us, "did as desperate people are wont to do, and secretly ran away" ("fecit quod solent desperati, clam aufugit").* He betook himself to Rome, and there earned his living by copying manuscripts, an occupation in which he was extremely skilled ("manu felicissima"). Soon his parents, wishing to put Margaret altogether out of his head, sent him a false story of her death. In despair he took priest's orders. On returning to Holland, he discovered the deceit that had been practised upon him. But he remained faithful to the sacred vows he had undertaken, and did not renew his former relations with her—"nec ille unquam tetigit eam."† The child who had been born in his absence received his name of Gerhard, which means "beloved." "Desiderius," Sir Richard Jebb remarks, "is barbarous Latin for that, and Erasmus is barbarous Greek for it. . . . The combination, Desiderius Erasmus, is probably due to the fact that he had been known as

* *Compendium Vitæ*, prefixed to vol. i. of the Leyden edition.

† *Ibid.*

Gerhard Gerhardson. It was a singular fortune for a master of literary style to be designated by two words, which both mean the same thing, and are both incorrect." *

Gerhard and Margaret devoted themselves to the education of their boys †—the usual account is that they had an elder son, Peter; and when Erasmus was four years old, he was put to school at Gouda, whence he was shortly sent to Utrecht, with a view of his becoming a chorister in the cathedral there. But, having no voice, he was removed at nine to Deventer, where among his schoolfellows was Adrian of Utrecht, afterwards Pope under the title of Adrian VI. The Deventer school was unusually good for those days—Hegius of Westphalia, a Hellenist of some pretensions, was at the head of it—and here Erasmus learnt much Latin, the elements of Greek, some logic, and a smattering of physics. Here, too, his brilliant gifts attracted attention, and the famous Rudolph Agricola predicted his future eminence. Horace and Terence were his favourite authors, and he is said to have known both by heart. After he had been at Deventer three years, his mother, who had taken up her abode there to supervise his

* P. 2.

† Amiel (p. 4) maintains with Gaudin "que l'Érasme était le fruit unique des amours de ses parents." One would like to believe this. But it is difficult to reconcile it with what Erasmus himself says in his famous letter to Grunnius (CCCCXLII. App.), "Duo fratres sunt . . . admodum pueri matre orbati sunt," &c.

education, died of the plague. His father never recovered from the shock of her death, and soon followed her to the grave. And thus at the age of thirteen Erasmus was left an orphan. He inherited from his mother great delicacy of physical constitution and an extreme sensitiveness; from his father a keen intellect, an ardour for learning, a ready wit, and a pecuniary provision which might have sufficed to provide him with the best education then attainable.

Of the guardians to whom the care of Erasmus had been entrusted by his father's will, one soon died of the plague, and the other two, partly from superstition, partly from fraudulent motives, as it would seem,* were bent upon making him embrace the monastic state. "The boy loathed the idea: he knew his father's story; and now it seemed as if the same shadow was to fall on his life also." † However, his guardians sent him to a house of Collationary Fathers at Hertogenbosh, where, as he tells us, he lost three years of his life. It was the business of these ecclesiastics to prepare youths for the religious orders, and their chief care ("præcipium studium") was, according to Erasmus, "if they saw any youth of unusually high spirit and quick disposition ('indole generosiore et alacriore'), to subdue and humble him by

* "Legavit rem mediocrem, si tutores bona fide administrassent," we read in the *Compendium Vitæ*.

† Jebb, p. 3.

means of blows, threats, scoldings, and other devices which they called 'breaking in,' and thus to fit him for the monastic life." * The only effect of this treatment upon Erasmus was to increase his disinclination for a state to which he felt he was not called. But his guardians insisted. He fell ill o a fever. An old Deventer school friend appeared on the scene, extolling the advantages of the monastic institute: its piety, its leisure, its opportunities for study, its freedom from worldly cares. At last Erasmus, exhausted physically and mentally, gave in, and entered as a novice the house of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine at Stein. He was then eighteen. In 1486 he made his solemn profession, most unwillingly, and received the religious habit.†

Erasmus remained at Stein for five miserable years. The life there was altogether unsuited to him. The daily round of the monastic rule he found irksome and unedifying. His fragile health —"valetudo plus quam vitrea" is his account of it—was unequal to the observance of fasting and abstinence. Fish was as poison to him: even the smell of it made him ill. A bad sleeper, he was often unable to obtain further repose after once rising for the night offices; and perpetual insomnia

* Ep. CCCCXLII. (App.).

† "Adolescens et animo abhorrens et verbis reluctans, coactus est capistrum accipere," is the account he gives of the matter in his letter to Grunnius (CCCCXLII. App.).

preyed upon his health and spirits. His reason and religion were both shocked by the much greater attention given to external practices of devotion than to spirituality of mind, or even to the elementary moralities of life. The classical and patristic studies to which, from earliest boyhood, he had been ardently devoted, were viewed with suspicion and dislike. He had to pursue them, as best he could, at odd times during the day, or in his enforced vigils at night. His experience of the monks was not favourable. Stupid, ignorant, given to gluttony and wine-bibbing, nay, in some cases, disregardful of their vow of chastity, and disposed to bully any one who preferred books to the table—such is, in substance, his account of the monastic brethren in general. Two of these, however, were of a different temperament: William Hermann, who shared his studies, and Servatius, who afterwards became prior of the convent. In a letter written to Servatius, when holding that office more than a quarter of a century later, he gives a singularly vivid account of his conventual life, dwells upon his utter unfitness for it, and bewails his having been kidnapped into it as an irreparable misfortune.*

Of the studies which Erasmus pursued while at Stein, we have no detailed account; but certain it is that they were unremitting, and procured for him a well-merited reputation as an excellent Latin

* Ep. VIII. (App.).

scholar. His fame reached the ears of the Bishop of Cambrai, who wanted a secretary, and offered him the post. He gladly accepted the offer, and, having obtained from his Prior and the General of his Order leave of absence, quitted his monastery never to return to it. This was in 1491. Erasmus remained with the Bishop for five years, and during that time received priest's orders. Then this prelate sent him to pursue his studies at the University of Paris, especially famous for its theological school, and obtained for him a burse at Montaigu College. Here he fared almost as badly as at Stein. The place was insanitary and insalubrious; the diet was meagre and unwholesome. Decadent scholasticism was the theology taught: "parietes ipsi mentem habent theologicam," Erasmus wrote thirty years afterwards in his Colloquy *ἰχθυοφαγία*: the very walls stank of it.* "The theologians, or theologasters"—such is his contemptuous term for them—he describes as endowed with "the most rotten brains, the most barbarous tongues, the most stupid intellects, the most unfruitful learning, the coarsest manners, the spitefulest tongues, the blackest hearts." He left the place after twelve months' trial, bringing away from it—as he affirms in the same Colloquy—nothing but a body full of infection and a very large supply of vermin. He went back to Cambrai ill. After a short stay in

* Ep. LXXV. A very amusing letter, addressed to Thomas Grey.

Holland, he returned to Paris, and lived in a modest chamber, supporting himself by tuition, and devoting all his spare time to the study of Greek. His reputation for scholarship must have been already considerable. He made acquaintance with eminent men of letters, among them being Publio Fausto Andrelini, the poet-laureate of the French king. And he appears to have had as many pupils as he could instruct. Two of them were young Englishmen of noble families: Thomas Grey, uncle of the Lady Jane who was subsequently to obtain such tragic fame in English history; and William Blunt, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, who became one of his most devoted and most trusted friends, and who invited him to England. He accepted the invitation, and paid his first visit to this country either at the end of 1497 or the beginning of 1498.

III.

Erasmus was now thirty-one. By unremitting toil, through evil report and through good report; by unswerving fidelity to that ideal of "good learning"—*bonæ literæ*—which, we may say, he had ever had before him since, as a child of four, he began his studies at Gouda; by that "strong patience which outwearies fate," he had at last made good his footing in the world of literature. His long apprenticeship was served. He was

recognized as a master of his craft, although he had, as yet, published nothing. Before we accompany him to England, where the second stage in his career—as I am considering it—opens, let me pause for a moment, and put before my readers an admirable page in which Professor Jebb has vividly sketched the outward characteristics of the man:—

"Erasmus was a rather small man, slight, but well-built; he had, as became a Teuton, blue eyes, yellowish or light-brown hair, and a fair complexion. The face is a remarkable one. It has two chief characteristics—quiet, watchful sagacity; and humour, half playful, half sarcastic. The eyes are calm, critical, steadily observant, with a half-latent twinkle in them; the nose is straight, rather long, and pointed; the rippling curves of the large mouth indicate a certain energetic vivacity of temperament and tenacity of purpose; while the pose of the head suggests vigilant caution, almost timidity. As we continue to study the features, they speak more and more clearly of insight and refinement; of a worldly yet very gentle shrewdness; of cheerful self-mastery; and of a mind which has its weapons ready at every instant. But there is no suggestion of enthusiasm, unless it be the literary enthusiasm of a student. It is difficult to imagine those cool eyes kindled by any glow of passion, or that genial serenity broken by a spiritual struggle. This man, we feel, would be an intellectual champion of truth and reason: his wit might be as the spear of Ithuriel, and his satire as the sword of Gideon; but he has not the face of a hero or a martyr." *

The first visit of Erasmus to England was a turning point in his life.† It marks, to use a

* P. 5.

† So he himself always considered. "Angliæ debeo quantum non alteri nationi," he wrote to Henry VIII. in 1520. (Ep. DXXXI.)

phrase of Cardinal Newman's, his coming out of his shell. His reputation had preceded him; and through Lord Mountjoy's introduction he was received with open arms by some of the noblest and best in this country. It was then that he made the acquaintance of More, Colet, Fisher, and Warham, who continued to their deaths his most devoted friends, and of whom he has left us such admirable portraits in his letters. In the spring of 1498 he went down to Oxford, where he found congenial society in the little group of Hellenists "intent on high designs, a thoughtful band," who were the pioneers of the new learning in this country. It must be remembered that both intellectually and religiously Europe then formed one vast republic; and the Latin language, which Erasmus spoke with singular ease and grace, was the common tongue of both religion and literature. The development of modern dialects, the consolidation of modern states, and above all the disappearance of ecclesiastical unity, have long destroyed that old cosmopolitanism. But in the time of Erasmus it still survived.*

Erasmus was charmed with his new friends and his new surroundings. Sunshine had at

* Erasmus writes: "Apud studiorum cultores minimum haberi momenti par est regionum discrimina. Quisquis communibus musarum sacris initiatus est, hunc ego ὁμοπάτριδα duco." (Ep. CCCXCIII.) "Ubi bene es ibi patria est," is a proverb he was fond of.

last come into his life. He writes to Mountjoy, "I cannot express how delightful I find this England of yours. . . . I have got rid of all that weariness (*tædium*) from which you used to see me suffer";* to Colet, "Your England is most pleasant to me, for many reasons, and chiefly because it possesses so many men well skilled in sound learning";† to Robert Fisher, "England pleases me as no other land has yet pleased me: the climate I find most agreeable and healthy, and I have come upon so much accurate and elegant scholarship, both Greek and Latin, that I hardly care now to go to Italy, except for the sake of seeing the country";‡ to Andrelini, that he is becoming quite a man of the world, a fair horseman, and a tolerable courtier, knowing how to bow gracefully and to smile affably, even when he feels least inclined.§ While at Oxford Erasmus lived with the learned and pious Richard Charnock, Prior of a house of his own order there. Among the distinguished Greek scholars then adorning the University were Grocyn, whom he describes as "master of the whole domain of knowledge;"‖ Linacre, the famous physician, a

* Ep. XLII. † Ep. XLI. ‡ Ep. XLV.

§ Ep. LXV. This "jesting letter," as Jortin (vol. i. p. 16) very properly calls it, ends with an amusing panegyric of English girls. Some grave writers appear to have taken its *badinage* seriously: Durand de Laur, for example, who exclaims (vol. i. p. 47), "lettre assez étrange pour un théologien!"

‖ Ep. XIV.

man of "acute, elevated, and accomplished intellect"; * and William Latimer, whose "most attractive purity of mind and more than virginal modesty," † were united to profound erudition.‡

In December, 1499, Erasmus quitted England and went back to Paris. There he fixed his headquarters during the next five or six years, being, however, frequently absent in search of books or manuscripts or on visits to his friends. Nothing is more astonishing than the amount of travelling that people accomplished in those days of difficult communication, squalid inns, and debased coinage. Somewhere about 1502 he appears to have been at Louvain, following the theological course of Adrian of Utrecht, who vainly endeavoured to keep him in that University. In 1504 he was entrusted with the duty of delivering at Brussels a Latin oration in honour of the return of Prince Philip from Spain, for which he received fifty pieces of gold. The Prince offered him some official position, but he refused. He was not disposed to sell his birthright of independence—so hardly vindicated—for any mess of pottage, however savoury. "Malo servire nulli et prodesse, si queam, omnibus," § he writes

* *Ibid.*

† Ep. CCCLXIII.

‡ His name is almost forgotten, as we have nothing extant of him. But "he was one of the greatest men of that age, learned in all sacred and profane letters, and answers fully the character which Erasmus gives of him, that he was 'vere theologus, integritate vitæ conspicuus.'" (Knight's *Life of Erasmus*, p. 29.)

§ Ep. CCLXXXV.

in one of his letters; and this represents his feeling throughout his life. His only fixed source of income at this time seems to have been a pension of one hundred crowns which had been settled on him by Lord Mountjoy, and which, unlike most of the pensions that he afterwards received, was regularly paid. In 1500 he published the first edition of his *Adages*, dedicating it to this generous patron, and prefixing to it some verses in eulogy of the Prince of Wales—afterwards Henry VIII.—to whom he had been presented during his visit to England. This book, which at once obtained for him a European reputation, was ever his favourite among his works. It is a collection of proverbial sayings from Greek and Latin authors, with comments of his own, always interesting, often amusing, not seldom pungent. Budæus used to call it "logotheca Minervæ," and Amiel happily describes it as "a prodigious monument of patience and knowledge, which only a scholar of the Renaissance epoch could undertake."* Froude observes:

"[This] work was . . . the beginning of his world-wide fame. . . . Light literature was not common in those days. The *Adagia* was a splendid success. Copies were sold in thousands, and helped a little to fill the emptied purse again. Light, good-humoured wit is sure of an audience, none the less

* P. 85. The first edition contains only eight hundred proverbs. In each subsequent issue the number was largely increased. The work now fills the second folio of the Leyden edition of Erasmus.

for the crack of the lash, now heard for the first time,* over the devoted heads of ecclesiastics and ecclesiasticism. It was mild compared with what was to follow; but the skins of the unreverend hierarchy were tender, and quivered at the touch. . . . The divines at Paris screamed. The divines at Cologne affected contempt. . . . But, rage or sneer as they would, they had to feel that there was a new man among them, with whom they would have to reckon. From all the best, from Erasmus's English friends especially, the *Adagia* had an enthusiastic welcome. Warham, who was soon to be Archbishop of Canterbury, was so delighted with it that he took his own copy with him wherever he went, and now, though he had met the author of the *Adagia* in England, perceived his real value for the first time. He sent him money. He offered him a benefice if he would return, and was profuse in his praises and admiration." †

In 1502 Erasmus published another work, which much increased his reputation, the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, or Christian Soldier's Manual. Froude calls it "the finest of Erasmus's minor compositions," ‡ a judgment so surprising as to induce a doubt whether Froude can have really read it. Certainly most men of letters would agree with Feugère's account of it: "livre assez froid et composé de treize chapitres peu liés entre eux." § To understand the enormous success of a work possessing such small intrinsic merit, if judged by the standard of these days, we must recall the conditions of the time in which it

* "The first time"! Froude could hardly have been ignorant that ecclesiastics and ecclesiasticism were the favourite topics of medieval satirists.

† P. 47. ‡ P. 78. § P. 29.

appeared. The old fervent faith, which was at the root of the greatness of the Middle Ages, had grown cold. Theology, so fruitful in the pages of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Buonaventura, had degenerated into the sterile strifes of decadent scholasticism. Devotion had largely sunk into a mechanical round of external observances. The *Enchiridion* * vindicated the claim of Christianity to be *rationale obsequium*, "a reasonable service." It is not easy for us to realize the large place which the monks then held in European society. It is still harder for us to determine the degree and extent of their degeneracy. The subject is too vast for discussion here. I may, however, be allowed to point out that while no one competent to appreciate evidence would give credence to the uncorroborated assertions of such persons as Henry VIII.'s "Visitors," or parliamentary draughtsmen, Erasmus is a witness whose personal testimony is entitled to much weight. No doubt it must be received with caution—must be "discounted," if I may so speak. His dislike of the monks is as intelligible as it is manifest. They had blighted his life. They did their best to blight the cause for which he chiefly lived. Unquestionably, he is

* Erasmus writes to Colet in 1504: "Enchiridion . . . conscripsi ad hoc solum, ut mederer errori vulgo religionem constituentium in ceremoniis et observationibus pene plusquam Judaicis rerum corporialium, ea quæ ad pietatem pertinent mire negligentium." (Ep. CII.)

hard upon them; bitter, ironical, abusive—sometimes unjust. But, when all due deductions have been made for his hostile prepossessions and satirical exaggerations, there is a great deal left. Take, for example, the famous letter to Grunnius, which was intended to be read, and which was read, to Leo X. Froude truly observes, "The account which he gives [there] of monastic profligacy he gives deliberately as his own, and he speaks of it as too well known to the Pope to need further proof."* The Pontiff granted the request made in this letter; and, so far as appears from the reply of Grunnius to Erasmus, took no exception to its statements. It must be remembered that Sir Thomas More found contemporary monasticism "somewhat degenerate from ancient strictness and fervour of spirit." †

The opening years of the sixteenth century were largely devoted by Erasmus to the study of Greek, a study then pursued amid great difficulties. It is not, indeed, correct to say, as Amiel says, "pas de secours, ni lexiques, ni grammaires," ‡ or, as Froude says, "no grammars or dictionaries were within reach." § At least eight Greek lexicons and as many Greek primers appeared before the end of the fifteenth century, and they were well within reach of students in every

* P. 169. † See p. 325. ‡ P. 82.

§ P. 37. Mr. Froude is speaking of Oxford in 1497. But the remarks in the text apply to this assertion.

European country. Teachers, too, were to be had, but they were costly and bad: so costly and so bad that Erasmus dispensed with them altogether, and, like Budæus, became his own instructor. He worked with an ardour fully meriting his success, and attained to such a mastery over the language that, as Sir Richard Jebb writes, "No one in Europe, at that time, unless it were Budæus, could have written [it] better."* It is well to remember, however, that for Erasmus language was a means, not an end. He was not a scholar of the type of Scaliger, of Casaubon, of Bentley, of Porson, of Heyne, of Orelli. He felt in his innermost being "all the charm of all the Muses," and, like Virgil, he might have called himself their priest. To vindicate the claims, to diffuse the knowledge, to extend the influence—the civilizing, the humanizing influence—of "good letters," was the aim of his life. And from the first he believed that there were two great obstacles to this educational work: the hostility of the monks, intolerant of the light shed by the new learning upon their ignorance and superstition; and the bigotry of theologians, who, jealous for the decadent and moribund scholasticism with which they had been indoctrinated, denounced that learning as heretical. Erasmus felt that, in order to deal effectively with these adversaries, he must obtain a recognized—nay, so to speak, an official—position.

* P. 26.

"There are two things," he wrote to the Marchioness of Vere, "which I have long felt to be absolutely necessary for this: one is that I should visit Italy, in order that the renown of that country may invest my poor learning with some little authority; the other, that I should take my doctor's degree. Both things are really absurd. 'Non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt,' as Horace tells us, nor will 'the shadow of a great name' make me one whit the more learned. But we must comply with the humour of these times, when no one is accounted learned—I do not say by the common people, but by those who are the recognized chiefs of learning—unless he is styled 'magister noster'; and that, too, in spite of the prohibition of Christ." *

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* Ep. XCII. I will give the original Latin and Froude's abridged translation side by side:—

"Duo quædam pernecessaria jamdudum sentio, alterum ut Italiam adeam, quo scilicet ex loci celebritate doctrinunculæ nostræ nonnihil auctoritatis acquiratur; alterum ut Doctoris nomen mihi imponam, ineptum quidem utrumque. Neque enim, ut inquit Horatius, statim animum mutant qui trans mare currunt, neque me vel pilo doctiorem magni nominis umbra fecerit; verum, ut nunc tempora sunt, ita morem geras, quando nunc non dicam vulgo, sed etiam iis qui doctrinæ principatum tenent, nemo doctus videri potest, nisi *magister noster* appelletur, etiam vetante Christo, Theologorum Principe."

"If I am to continue this work, I must visit Italy. I must show myself there to establish my personal consequence. I must acquire the absurd title of Doctor. It will not make me a hair the better, but, as times go, no man now can be counted learned, despite of all which Christ has said, unless he is styled Magister." (P. 75.)

It will be noted that, in the one place where Froude

These words were written in 1500. It was not until six years later, that the opportunity of fulfilling his long-cherished aspiration of visiting Italy, presented itself to Erasmus. Towards the end of 1505 he came to England for a second time,* and stayed some six months, in the course of which he went to Cambridge, where he delivered a few lectures on Greek, and received the degree of B.D. The greater part of the time he now spent in England was passed in the society of More and Grocyn. He saw also much of Warham —newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, and one of the worthiest occupants of that illustrious see—who ever showed him the warmest, or, to use his own phrase, the most paternal regard. Another of his friends was Dr. Baptista Boerio, or Boyer as he was called in England, the celebrated physician of Henry VII. The Doctor was about to send his two sons, Giovanni and Bernardo, to Italy. He invited Erasmus to accompany them, not exactly as a tutor, but as

endeavours to keep close to the original, he fails to write English—an unusual fault in him. "A hair the better" is not English, and would be unintelligible without the Latin.

* Froude writes (p. 78), "He was undoubtedly in England in 1501 or 1502." There is no evidence whatever that Erasmus was in England in those years, and it is most improbable that he was. A few lines lower we read, "It is equally certain that he was at Bologna in 1504." As a matter of fact, it is beyond question that he was not at Bologna until 1506.

director of their studies. Erasmus gladly accepted the invitation. They left England in the middle of June, 1506, a royal courier (*caduceator*) accompanying them. After being tossed about in the Channel for four days, they landed at Calais and proceeded on their way.

Erasmus remained in Italy for three pleasant and fruitful years. He first spent three weeks at Turin, where he took the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Thence he went to Bologna, where the young Boerios were to pursue their studies at the University, then in the fulness of the reputation which it has never wholly lost. Here he made the acquaintance of the celebrated scholar, Scipio Fortiguerra di Pistoia, better known by the Greek name of Carteromachos, and contracted an intimate friendship with a hardly less distinguished Hellenist, Paul Bombasio—a friendship unbroken until Bombasio's tragic death at the siege of Rome in 1527. One of the first sights which greeted Erasmus in Bologna was the triumphal entry of Julius II. into the city. "I like to picture him to myself, in the great street there," writes Nisard, "well wrapped up in his furs, with a look of light irony on his face, gazing at the procession as it went by, meditating those discreet criticisms on the militant Papacy, in which his enemies later on were to find heresies worthy of the stake."* After

* Vol. i. p. 37.

the *fêtes* in honour of the Church thus strangely triumphant—probably in consequence of them, Nisard conjectures—came the plague, and the Italians, as is their wont in such cases, were mad with fear of infection. An order was issued by the civic authorities that medical men engaged in attending on sufferers from the pestilence should wear a white scarf, so that people might recognise and avoid them. The scapulary of the Augustinian habit, which Erasmus wore, was very like this scarf, and caused him to be mistaken for a plague doctor as he unconcernedly made his way about the city, jostling against the passers-by. The consequence was that on two occasions he had a narrow escape for his life from the fury of the alarmed citizens. He obtained, therefore, from Pope Julius II. an exemption, afterwards confirmed by Leo X., from wearing this distinctive portion of the monastic dress, and for the future wore a costume half cleric half lay, in which we may see the outward visible sign of the inner man of the heart.

During the thirteen months which he spent at Bologna, Erasmus was much occupied in preparing a second edition of his *Adages*. In order personally to supervise the printing of it at the Aldine press, he went to Venice at the end of 1507, taking leave of the Boerio youths, with whose father and tutor he had had difficulties. Venice was then at the summit of its prosperity, con-

taining over 300,000 inhabitants. Commines, who had visited it a few years previously, describes it as the most magnificent city he had ever seen. Its political power, indeed, was already on the wane; but it was at the height of its artistic and literary splendour. The Aldine press was the centre of learned studies. At the Aldine Academy the discussions were conducted in Greek, and the rules were drawn up in that language. Here Erasmus spent six months in the house of Andreas Asolanus (Andrew of Asolo), the father-in-law of Aldus. He was occupied in seeing his *Adages* through the press, and in intercourse with various savants. Conspicuous among these were Musurus of Crete, a singularly accomplished Hellenist, and Jerome Aleander—afterwards Cardinal—who to high proficiency in Greek and in theological and philosophical studies, added the unusual accomplishment of a good knowledge of Hebrew. At Venice, Erasmus and Aleander were on the best of terms, sharing not merely the same roof, the same table, the same chamber, but sometimes even the same bed. Later on, as we shall see, their friendship was succeeded by estrangement; nay, by bitter hostility.

Towards the end of 1508, Erasmus quitted Venice, carrying away with him a disease which he had contracted there—the gravel—and which was a plague to him, off and on, for the rest of his life. He now passed nearly twelve months in

Padua—"fair Padua, nursery of arts," as Shakespeare calls it.* He had been asked by James IV. of Scotland to fill the office of teacher of rhetoric there, to that monarch's illegitimate son, Alexander, a youth of much promise, then eighteen years of age, and already named Archbishop of St. Andrew's. Erasmus was delighted with his pupil and formed a great affection for him. But his preceptorial duties left him sufficient leisure to pursue with his accustomed ardour his Hellenic studies, profiting as occasion offered by the counsels of Musurus and Carteromachos. His stay at this pleasant seat of learning was cut short in December, 1508, by rumours of war due to the unquiet temperament of Julius II., who had just entered, with the Emperor and the Kings of France and Spain, into the League of Cambrai. Accompanied by the young Archbishop, he travelled south, and after a short stay at Ferrara reached Sienna, probably early in January. Towards the end of February, leaving his pupil behind him there, he proceeded to Rome, which he was impatient to visit. On his arrival, he beheld a second triumph of Pope Julius, who, this time, had annexed Bologna.

It cannot be said of him that "he brought an eye for all he saw" in the Eternal City. Neither the inimitable masterpieces of recent art, nor the

* So Erasmus: "locupletissimum ac celeberrimum optimarum disciplinarum emporium." (Ep. DCCLXXI.)

priceless relics of classical antiquity,* seem to have excited his enthusiasm. Goethe somewhere says that the condition of all greatness is devotion to an idea. Erasmus was entirely devoted to the pursuit of "good learning." He lived with men of letters, and with great ecclesiastics who were their patrons and often their fellow-students. The magnificent libraries of the city were its chief attractions to him. "Musarum tranquillissimum domicilium," † he calls it. Among the eminent persons whose friendship he made in Rome, four are specially worthy of mention here: Ægidius of Viterbo, then General of his Order of Augustinian Canons, and subsequently Cardinal, a devout man and an accomplished scholar, who felt deeply the crying abuses in the Church and the urgent need of reform; Cardinal Grimani, whose reception of him is described at length in one of the most charming of his letters; Cardinal Raphael Riario, commonly called the Cardinal of St. George, from his titular church of San Giorgio-in-Velabro, which, by the way, was Cardinal Newman's titular church; and the Cardinal dei Medici, afterwards Leo X., who conceived for him a great esteem.

* In the *Dialogus Ciceronianus*, written many years afterwards, there is a picturesque sentence: "Roma, Roma non est, nihil habens præter ruinas ruderaque, priscæ calamitatis cicatrices ac vestigia."

† Ep. DCCCCLXXXVIII. An extremely interesting letter, addressed to Cardinal (then Bishop) Sadoleto, after the sack of Rome.

Efforts were made to retain him in Rome. The lucrative post of penitentiary, regarded as a safe stepping-stone to high preferment, was offered him. He refused it. He refused, too, the pressing solicitations of Cardinal Grimani, whose palace and library were put at his disposal. Henry VII. had just died. Henry VIII., who liked the society of men of letters, had, as a child, seen Erasmus, had corresponded with him, and had quite recently addressed to him an autograph letter couched in most friendly terms.* Mountjoy wrote to him announcing the death of the old King, describing in glowing language the golden age for literature which might be expected under the new, and urging his immediate return to England.† Eras-

* Ep. VIII. (App.). "Scripsit ad me suapte manu litteras amantissimas." This letter, as M. de Nolhac correctly judges, was written before Henry VII.'s death: "Une lettre autographe du prince héritier" (p. 85). It appears to have perished.

† Froude tells us (p. 84) that Erasmus "appears to have decided finally to remain" in Rome—an assertion for which there is no tittle of evidence—"when his future was changed by two letters . . . one from his friend Mountjoy, to announce the accession of Henry VIII. and the desire of the new King to attach Erasmus to his own Court," the other from the new King himself. Froude supposes these two letters to be those marked respectively x. and CCCCL. (App.) in the Leyden edition, and gives "abridged translations" of them in his usual free style. Now, there can be no doubt whatever that Ep. x. —it is misplaced and misdated in the Leyden edition—is the letter which Mountjoy wrote upon this occasion. Equally beyond doubt is it, from internal evidence, that the letter of

mus decided to comply with this advice; and after a hurried expedition with his young Archbishop to

Henry VIII., CCCCL. (App.), which bears no date, could not possibly have been written in 1509, but must be referred to some twenty years later, as a very moderate amount of reflection and research would have convinced Froude. The King speaks in it of his having heard from Warham that Erasmus's life had been in danger from the machinations of certain very evil men, most determined enemies of the Christian faith ("impissimos aliquot homines et Christianæ religionis hostes insensissimos"), whom Froude's abridged translation waters down into "ill-wishers." Now, Erasmus was not in any such danger until the years 1528–29; and then he was, or thought himself so to be, from the violence attending the suppression of Catholicism at Basle, where he was at that time residing. See his letters during those years *passim*, and especially Ep. MXXXIII., where he says, "Mihi vertendum solum quod non absque summo vitæ discrimine scio me facturum." Secondly, Henry VIII. speaks of the great regard which even as a boy he felt for Erasmus, and assigns two reasons for the increase of that regard as years went on: the immortality conferred by the mention made of him in Erasmus's works, and the inestimable labours of Erasmus for the advancement and exposition of the Christian faith. But no mention had been made of Henry VIII. in the few works published by Erasmus up to 1509, except in the complimentary verses prefixed to the *Adages*, nor had Erasmus then even begun to give to the world the biblical and patristic labours so commended by the King. Thirdly, Henry affirms that for some years he had been desirous—he attributes the desire to Divine inspiration—to restore the Christian faith and religion to pristine purity, to put down heresies, and to give the word of God free and pure course. It is quite certain that Henry's mind was not turned to these subjects for many years subsequently to his accession: the only "heresies" which he set himself to combat were those of the Protestant Reformers, which did not crop up until long after 1509. And so—fourthly

Naples and Cumæ, set out for this country, which he reached early in July, 1509.

These three years in Italy had done much for Erasmus. M. de Nolhac justly remarks, "Italy was the school where his intellectual formation was finished. There was fully matured the literary talent which was to stir the ideas of a whole generation,* and that the most fruitful of the century. There, too, was it that he became fully conscious of the new spirit of which he was the

—the remark which he goes on to make that, if Erasmus were taken away, a great barrier to the spread of heresy would have disappeared, would have been absolutely unmeaning. Lastly, Henry's reminder—this passage of the letter Froude altogether omits—that Erasmus had been wont to speak of England as the refuge of his old age, would hardly have been addressed to a man just turned forty. It would seem to be pretty clear that this letter, CCCCL. (App.), is the one referred to by Erasmus in writing to Pirkheimer in 1528 (Ep. MVI.), and that such is its proper date. "In Angliam invitat amantissime tum rex, tum archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, sed plurima sunt quæ me deterrent ab ea insula." The last nine words probably refer chiefly to the matter of the divorce, which had begun to be publicly mooted in the previous year. No doubt Henry VIII.—as I have pointed out at page 135—did write to Erasmus shortly before he left Italy. And Mountjoy, no doubt, refers to this letter, which has perished, when in his own announcing the death of Henry VII. he says, "Litteras ejus (sc. Henricii VIII.) digitis exaratas . . . accepisti,"—which Froude translates, "He has written to you, as you will perceive, under his own hand"; the words "as you will perceive" being foisted in to support Froude's hypothesis that Mountjoy's letter and the young King's arrived together.

* *Érasme en Italie*, p. 94.

great propagator in the Northern countries." But this is not all. Lord Mountjoy, in the letter just referred to, observes that the Italian visit had augmented not only Erasmus's learning, but his renown—"te tantum et literarum et nominis illic adeptum esse perspicio." Rome was then the intellectual as well as the ecclesiastical capital of the world. And the approbation of its refined, cultivated, and fastidious scholars gave "the guinea stamp" to Erasmus's reputation. It was no small trouble to him to quit the City—"alma urbs," he is fond of calling it—which he had grown to love. "Unless I had violently torn myself away, I should never have left it," he wrote to Cardinal Grimani.* The longing to return—"desiderium Romæ" is his phrase—never left him. Hardly a year passed without his making some plan—never to be carried out—for gratifying it.

And here, before we pass away from this portion of Erasmus's life, the reflection naturally occurs, whether the course of European history might not have been very different had he complied with the invitations pressed upon him, and remained at Rome, and dedicated himself to an ecclesiastical career there. That he would soon have attained a high position in the Curia Romana is not open to doubt. Invested with the Cardinalitial dignity, a trusted Privy Councillor of Leo X., who fully

* Ep. CLXVII.

appreciated both his learning and his piety, might he not have withheld that Pontiff, constitutionally indisposed to violent courses, from the fatal policy which drove Luther, unwillingly, into rebellion? Certain it is, as Bishop Creighton has pointed out, that "in all the list of men of learning who graced the Papal Court, there was no one found to understand the issue raised by Luther, and to suggest a basis for reconciliation."* As certain is it—this comes out over and over again in Erasmus's letters—that he fully understood that issue, and could have suggested a way of escape from it. Might he not have successfully counselled reforms in abatement of those crying abuses and scandals in the Church, which shocked all wise men and saddened all good men? Might he not have hindered, or at all events have softened, the collision between "old and new, disastrous strife," the issue of which was to shatter the religious unity of Europe, to dissolve the brotherhood of men in some sort realized in medieval Christendom?

III.

But these are questionings as idle as they are natural. Let us turn from them to follow Erasmus's life and labours in this—the third and cul-

* *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, vol. v. p. 180.

minating—period of his career. On arriving in England in July, 1509, he took up his abode in More's house at Bucklersbury, where he wrote the *Encomium Moriæ*, or *Praise of Folly*, which, however, was not published until three years later. And now he found that Lord Mountjoy's brilliant prophecies of his future were not to be fulfilled. The new King was occupied in preparations for war, and appears to have taken little notice of him. Warham could only offer to him the living of Aldington—one of the best in the Archbishop's gift—which he declined, accepting, however, a pension charged upon it. At the invitation of Bishop Fisher, Chancellor of Cambridge, he went down to that University, then much in advance of Oxford in "good learning," and gave lectures on Greek there. In 1511 he was elected to the Lady Margaret Professorship of Divinity, and in 1513—the election was then biennial—he was re-elected. "This," Professor Jebb observes, is a "noteworthy fact. The electing body comprised the whole Faculty of Theology, regulars as well as seculars. The *Praise of Folly* must, by that time, have been well known there. If Erasmus was not universally acceptable to the Schoolmen, or to the monks of Cambridge, at any rate, the general respect for his character and attainments carried the day."* In 1514 he left England, never to return, except for a hurried visit in the next year. The immediate

* P. 28.

motive for his departure probably was, as Professor Jebb conjectures, his desire to supervise the printing of his Greek Testament in Froben's press in Basle. In this year the Emperor Charles V. conferred on him the title of Councillor, with a salary of four hundred florins, unaccompanied by any conditions as to residence.

And here I must say something about the *Encomium Moriæ*, or *Praise of Folly*, published in 1512.* Most literary critics regard it as Erasmus's best work. Certainly it was, and still is, the most popular of his books. It went through twenty-seven large editions in his lifetime. And even now, when its immediate interest and importance have so long passed away, it is still something more than a name to most cultivated men. Nowhere is the author's keen, supple, and active intellect seen to greater advantage. Nowhere is his diction more lively and polished and fluent. Nowhere is his satire—an essential constituent in all his writings—more graceful and airy and mordant. And if he appears to us, who read him in this twentieth century, to use, here and there, too great plainness of speech, it must be remembered that he wrote for another age. Ears polite were much less easily shocked then than they are now. But the literary merits of this famous satire

* Froude says, "It appeared almost simultaneously with the edition of the New Testament" (p. 122). This is not so. The New Testament was not published until 1516.

are by no means its only merits. It was a triumphant indictment at the bar of public opinion of the two great enemies of "good learning"—degenerate monachism, and effete scholasticism;* an indictment preferred by the most accomplished man of letters then living; an indictment the more effective from the mocking tone in which it is couched, when Folly claims these ecclesiastical obscurantists as her darling children, and celebrates their wonderful performances.

"They explain hidden mysteries as they please: how the world was made and set in order; by what channels original sin was conveyed to posterity; in what ways, what measure, how little time, Christ was perfected in the Virgin's womb; how, in the Eucharist, accidents † exist without location. But these are mere commonplaces. The following are the kind of questions they think worthy of great and—as their phrase is—illuminated Theologians. Does the category of time apply to the divine generation? Is there more than one relation of sonship in Christ? Whether the proposition, God the Father hates the Son, can be maintained? Whether God could be hypostatically united to ‡ a woman, the Devil, an ass, a gourd,

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* Froude tells us (p. 124): "The object of the *Moria* was evidently to turn the whole existing scheme of theology into ridicule." That this was not its object is evident on the face of the book. The extravagances and ineptitudes laughed at by Erasmus did not constitute "the whole existing scheme of theology," but were excrescences upon it.

† "Quemadmodum in synaxi accidentia subsistant." Froude translates "how accident subsists in synaxis." He does not seem to have been aware of the meaning of the theological term "accidentia."

‡ "Num Deus potuerit suppositare mulierem." Froude translates, "whether God can become the substance of a

a flint? Then, how a gourd could have preached, worked miracles, have been crucified? . . . Add to this those conceits of theirs which are such paradoxes,* that beside them the Stoic oracles bearing that name seem most dull and commonplace; as, for example, that it is a less crime to kill a thousand men than even once to mend a poor man's shoe on a Sunday; and that it would be better to let the whole world perish, with bag and baggage, than to tell the least little lie. . . . I think the very Apostles themselves would want some other spirit if they were obliged to encounter this new race of Theologians. . . . No doubt they devoutly consecrated the Eucharist.† And yet, if asked about the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*, concerning the mode in which the same body could be in diverse places, concerning the difference between the body of Christ in heaven, on the Cross, and in the sacrament

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woman." "Suppositare" does not mean "to become the substance of."

* "Adde nunc γνώμας illas adeo παραδόξους ut illa Stoicorum oracula quæ paradoxa vocant crassissima præ his videantur et circumforanea: velut levius esse crimen homines mille jugulare quam semel in die Domenico calceum pauperi consuere," &c. Froude translates, "Like the Stoics, they have their paradoxes: whether it is a smaller crime to kill a thousand than to mend a beggar's shoe," &c. Can Froude have supposed that a paradox is a question?

† "Pie quidem illi consecrabant synaxim." Froude translates, "An Apostle might affirm the synaxis." He can hardly have supposed that "consecrare" means "to affirm," and at first sight one is puzzled to imagine why he so rendered it. The explanation would seem to be that the word "synaxis"—which he keeps in the original—was too much for him. In a note on p. 117 he tells us "Synaxis was an explanation of the Real Presence." He does not seem to have been acquainted with Erasmus's own verses:—

> "Mysticus ille cibus, Græci dixere synaxim,
> Qui panis vinique palam sub imagine Christum
> Ipsum præsentem vere exhibet."

of the Eucharist, they would not, I think, have answered with the same acuteness wherewith the Scotists discuss and define these things."

The monks are as unsparingly dealt with as the theologians. They call themselves religious and solitaries (*monachi*), Folly says, and both names are false. The greater number of them are very far removed from religion, and they swarm everywhere. They consider it a token of great piety to be so ignorant as not to know how to read. They bray out in the churches with their asinine voices a stated number of Psalms, of which they do not understand one word, and then they suppose that they have wheedled the ears of the Saints with their ravishing strains. Some of them make a trade of dirt and begging, and a very good trade too; others there are who, out of respect for their rule, avoid the contact of money like poison, but have no scruple about the contact of wine and women. Such are some of the heads of the indictment against those *crassos, semper cibo distentos monachos*, whom Erasmus pursued from first to last so unrelentingly. But Folly does not spare any order of ecclesiastics. Bishops, Cardinals, Popes, supply her with a theme. Even the reigning Pontiff, the warlike Julius II., is more than glanced at.* It is a signal token of the tolerant

* Was Erasmus the author of the *Julius Exclusus*? I do not believe that he was. He always denied it; and veracity was one of his characteristic virtues. Writing to Wolsey in 1518 he says, "I have written nothing, nor shall I write anything, without putting my name to it." (Ep. CCCXVII.)

spirit then animating the rulers of the Church that no word was heard from Rome in disapproval of these freedoms.

The tolerance became even larger under Leo X., who in 1513 succeeded to the Papal Chair. The new Pope had been delighted with the *Encomium Moriæ*, and accepted,* without scruple, the dedication of Erasmus's Greek Testament, which appeared, with a Latin translation and notes, in 1516. This work was certainly of no less importance than the *Praise of Folly*. But Froude has curiously mistaken its real significance. He writes: "Of the Gospels and Epistles so much only was known to the laity as was read in the Church services. . . . Of the rest of the Bible nothing was known at all. . . . Copies of the Scriptures were rare, shut up in convent libraries, and studied only by professional theologians."† He adds that by Erasmus's New Testament "the living facts of Christianity, the person of Christ and His Apostles, their history, their lives, their teaching, were revealed to an astonished world." ‡ Erasmus beyond all question would have been very much astonished by this account of the matter. Certain it is that during the Middle Ages the

* In a very complimentary letter, dated January 26, 1516, and printed among the Epistles of Erasmus (CXCIII). On September 10, 1518, Leo X. expressed his warm approval of the second edition by a Brief, which is prefixed to the work in the Leyden edition

† P. 112. ‡ P. 113.

minds of the most popular preachers and teachers were saturated with the Sacred Scriptures. Nothing is more striking than the biblical cast —if I may use the expression—of medieval literature generally, with which Froude, I suppose, was not very intimately acquainted. The "living facts of Christianity," I need hardly observe, are to be read just as legibly in the Vulgate * as in Erasmus's translation, or even in the original Greek. But in his days the venerable writings which are the title-deeds of the Christian religion, though accessible enough, whether to the clergy or the instructed laity, were largely neglected. And no doubt this *editio princeps* of the Greek Testament awoke a new interest in them. Its critical merit is inconsiderable. But there can be no question at all that it exercised a most important influence on biblical exegesis. For the generation in which it appeared its chief value lay in this:

* Froude writes: "Ignatius Loyola once looked into Erasmus's New Testament, read a little, and could not go on: he said it checked his devotional emotions" (p. 115). Froude evidently supposed, or meant his readers to suppose, that this was Ignatius Loyola's first, perhaps sole, acquaintance with the New Testament. As a matter of fact, Ignatius —apart from all theories about him—was extremely familiar with that volume, and with the Old Testament too. "Mighty in the Scriptures," might be said of him. I may observe that it was not Erasmus's New Testament, but his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, which Ignatius found undevotional according to Massæus, the Saint's biographer, who is the authority for the story.

that, disregarding traditional interpretations, and discarding the allegorical method, it seeks to bring out the real meaning of the sacred writers and to apply the same to the corruptions and superstitions of the age. I should add that it appealed not *ad populum*—none of Erasmus's works do—but to the thoughtful and cultivated. And it did not appeal in vain.*

It is not necessary for my present purpose—nor would my space permit—that we should follow Erasmus through all the details of his vast literary labours. A mere glance at the catalogue of his books will suffice to show how incessant those labours must have been. "I have not time to be ill," he writes in one of his letters. We may apply to him the words of Rabelais: "Tel était son esprit entre les livres comme est le feu parmi les brandes." In classical and patristic literature he was a pioneer. Here, too, the critical worth of his work is not great. It was done too hurriedly, and with too scanty appliances. His it was to point the way which subsequent scholars were to follow with more ample profit. But in truth his first object was always educational, in the largest sense

* In a letter to Leo X., regarding the second edition of the work, Erasmus says that his purpose in publishing it had been largely accomplished. "Qui hactenus e putribus lacunis perturbatam quandam ac frigidam Theologiam hauriebant, nunc e purissimis fontibus Christi et Apostolorum haurire malunt." (Ep. CCCCLIII.)

of the word. His aim was humanizing: to soften the manners of men, to tame their passions, to make their lives sounder and saner and sweeter. In his prefaces and notes to the works which he edited, shrewd appreciations of various aspects of human existence, pungent observations on popular follies, good-humoured pleadings for truth and temperance and tolerance, occupy a larger place than critical disquisitions on his author. His books are brimful of actuality. And that, no doubt, is one reason of the vast influence they exercised. Nor must we forget that, during all that literary toil, his correspondence was enormous. He describes himself aptly enough as πολυγράφος. He must have lived with his pen in his hand. From all parts of the civilized world princes, prelates, professors write to him, desiring his counsels or—perhaps oftener—seeking some mark of recognition from him. His friends * marvelled at the impudence of correspondents who idly interrupt his labours. But for all he has a kind and courteous reply, longer or shorter as the matter requires: "wearing his wisdom lightly," as in pleasant and witty words, he freely imparts the results of his acute observation, his vast erudition, his mature thought. In 1515 one of his Cambridge friends and pupils, John Watson,

* One of them writes in 1519, "Sæpe eorum risi impudentiam qui labores tuos toti orbi salutares ineptis suis litteris interpellant." (Ep. CCCLXXIX.)

Fellow of Peterhouse, wrote to him with enthusiastic delight of his growing greatness, his increasing authority.* His greatness and authority went on increasing until, in 1519, we find him, as Nisard observes, "in full possession of his glory."

"Three young Kings, the greatest in Europe, all called to the throne about the same time, contend which shall have him as a voluntary subject. Popes write to him to announce their accession and to offer him public hospitality at Rome. Little States, as well as great ones, provinces and cities as well as States, invite him to enjoy in their midst a glorious repose. Every one flatters him, even Luther. All the presses of Germany, England, and Italy reproduce his writings. All the reading world reads nothing but Erasmus. A comparison which he publishes between Budæus and Badius creates so much stir that Francis I. causes a report of it to be made to him in Council as though it were an affair of State. All who write imitate his way of writing; even his enemies cannot attack him without casting their rejoinders into his own style. The world is pregnant with wars to come; it already seems prescient of the shock that will be soon given it by the ambition of these young princes, and by those great interests of general civilization of which their ambition will be the instrument; but it keeps silence for a moment around Erasmus: that Erasmus who, as his admirers say, has resuscitated antiquity and the Gospel. He has just turned fifty. He is not less poor ('nécessiteux') than he was when he started in life. His health is always fragile, but it is kept up by the noble fever of renown." †

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* "Miror indies magis et magis Erasmum, quo magis in annis processerit, eo magis grandescere, et quotidie novum et auctiorem sese ostendere.' (Ep. CLXXXIII.)

† Vol. i. p. 74. Poverty is a relative term. Erasmus was never opulent, and did not wish to be so. He certainly was not indigent, during the period of his life which we are now

V.

And now we enter upon the last stage of Erasmus's career, when he was enforced to leave the tranquil pursuits of scholarship and literature, so congenial to his tastes and temperament, and, unwillingly, to engage in the theological and philosophical conflicts aroused by the Lutheran controversy. The cloud, fated to darken for him all the heavens during the last fifteen years of his life, had arisen no bigger than a man's hand, so long before as 1509. A converted Jew of Cologne, one Pfefferkorn, had proposed the destruction of all Hebrew books, except the Old Testament. The Dominican Inquisitors approved of the proposal. Reuchlin, a man of high standing, and a distinguished scholar, specially versed in Hebrew, wrote vigorously in opposition to this insane obscurantism. Erasmus, although knowing no Hebrew, or hardly any, and not highly valuing

considering, nor afterwards. When he was Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, his income, it is estimated, must have been equivalent to £700 a year of our money. He must have been much better off in 1519, with his various pensions, and the revenue, constant if uncertain, derived from the sale of his works. But his expenses were always considerable. He had need of secretaries, copyists, messengers, grooms, and of at least two horses, one for himself and one for his servant. His charities were munificent, and his way of living delicate and refined. He was a lover of good wine, *modicis cantharis*, and especially of old Burgundy: "ce qui prouve son bon goût," Amiel justly remarks.

the literature contained in that language, strenuously supported Reuchlin, writing in praise of him to Leo. X., and earnestly commending him to the protection of Cardinals Grimani and Riario. The Dominicans were furious: and while this controversy—I shall give an account of it in the next chapter—dragged its slow length along, Luther appeared on the scene, condemning the traffic in indulgences conducted by certain of them.

The condemnation had the sympathy of Erasmus, as of all good and wise men. Apart from theological controversies, there can be no question at all, that indulgences as then preached "with intolerable impudence," * were practically what Cardinal Ægidius did not hesitate to call them: "an incentive to sin and a danger to souls." † Erasmus, in well-known passages of his works, had inveighed against them in terms not less scathing than those employed by Luther. But the two men were cast in very different moulds, and followed very different methods. In Erasmus we have the polished irony of the philosopher; in Luther the fiery denunciation of the prophet. We find Erasmus writing in July, 1518: "Luther has given many admirable admoni-

* "Dominicani quidam intolerabili impudentia concionabantur de indulgentiis; Lutherus, more suo, reclamavit." (Ep. MLXXXV.)

† Quoted by Bishop Creighton, *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, vol. v. p. 207.

tions, but I would that he had expressed himself more courteously. . . . Still, so far, he has certainly done good." * At this time the two men had had no communication, nor, as Erasmus mentions to Cardinal Wolsey,† had he really read any of Luther's writings. He had, in fact, as he tells the Cardinal, been on his guard against Luther. He did not wish that the cause of good learning should be associated with a man whose tone and temper he distrusted. In January, 1519, Melanchthon wrote to tell him how highly Luther rated his name and desired his approbation.‡ And three months afterwards a letter to the same effect reached him from Luther, who addresses him as "decus nostrum et spes nostra." § Erasmus replied in May by a very guarded epistle, in which he takes occasion to remark that theological points are not with advantage discussed before an ignorant multitude, that moderate and courteous language is more likely to serve a good cause than passionate invective, that attacks on persons should be avoided, and that it is necessary

* "Multa præclare monuit Lutherus, sed utinam civilius admonuisset. . . . Hactenus certe profuit mundo." (Ep. CCCXXV.)

† Ep. CCCXVII.

‡ "Martinus Lutherus studiosissimus nominis tui, per omnia tibi probari cupit." (Ep. CCCLXXVIII.)

§ Ep. CCCXCIX. Luther continues, "Sed ego stultus, qui te talem virum, sic illotis manibus absque reverentia et honoris præfatione veluti familiarissimum aggredior, ignotum ignotus."

to be on one's guard against anger, hatred, and vain-glory. "No doubt," he adds, "these are the rules you have followed, and I hope that you will go on following them." * "Praise undeserved is satire in disguise," and the most effective satire. These words † must surely have been sovereignly displeasing to Luther, who possessed what Bishop Creighton calls "a command of virulent invective and a power of personal onslaught which were unbefitting a zealous seeker after truth," ‡ and who from the first made full proof of those endowments. His followers, however, construed them as an unqualified approbation of what he had done. There can be no question that Erasmus did not so intend them. The end of the Saxon Reformer in those early days of his—the abatement of superstition—was good. That Erasmus did not doubt. His method seemed questionable. Degenerate Monachism and effete Scholasticism were the common foes of both. But the weapons of their warfare were different. No alliance was possible between these two men. "He works his work, I mine."

So matters stood in 1519. And if we would

* "Non admoneo ut facias, sed ut quod facis perpetuo facias." (Ep. CCCCXVIII.)

† Writing to Leo X. in 1520 (Ep. DXXIX.) he explains that he thus expressed himself out of civility in addressing a man who was a stranger to him.

‡ *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, vol. v. p. 117.

appreciate the situation rightly, we must remember that neither Erasmus nor Luther, nor any one else, in the least foresaw the course which events were to take. "Luther," Bishop Creighton finely observes, "would never have been the leader of a great rebellion if he had clearly known whither he was tending." * "His opinions were evolved by the necessities of a conflict which was by no means inevitable." † I shall have to return to this point in Chapter V. I go on to observe that the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century, like the great political revolution of the eighteenth, took mankind by surprise. In both these momentous crises of the world's history, grave changes were in the air. All intelligent men saw that. But that those changes should have shaped themselves as they did, exhibits signally with how little wisdom the world is governed. The Pope's advisers utterly mistook the meaning of the movement in Germany and the temper of the German people. To quote again the well-weighed words of Bishop Creighton: "Leo showed no sense of his responsibility in the issue of the Bull [*Exsurge Domine*], but allowed himself to be the mouthpiece of Luther's theological opponents. . . . It was a deplorable mistake to assume such a position." ‡ Curious irony of fate that one of the most amiable and

* *History of the Papacy*, &c., vol. v. p. 89.

† *Ibid.*, p. 137.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

peace-loving of the Roman Pontiffs—"suavissimus ille pater," Luther called him—whose mind was entirely averse from theological disputations, should have precipitated the fiercest ecclesiastical conflicts, and have let loose the bitterest religious controversies, of the modern world.

The Bull *Exsurge Domine* was published on June 15, 1520; and on December 10th Luther publicly burnt it before the Elster Gate at Wittenburg. It was the beginning of what Erasmus calls —the expression is habitual with him — "the Lutheran tragedy." His position was now most difficult. Personally he did not like Luther, whose passionate enthusiasm was quite alien from his spirit of rational criticism, who was utterly insensible to the splendour and sweetness of the fair humanities which were his first object. But he always held, and never shrank from saying, that Luther had been hounded into revolt; that the Roman Curia had to thank their own blindness and blundering for converting a harmless necessary reformer into a needless and noxious rebel. Writing to Pirckheimer in September, 1520, he expresses his vehement sorrow ("mihi vehementer dolere") that "a man from whom he had hoped so much good should have been driven wild by rabid clamours." * And ten years afterwards, reviewing the course of events in a striking letter to Bishop (afterwards Cardinal) Sadoleto, he says:

* Ep. DXXVII.

"If throughout the world you see terrible tumults arise, fatal to Germany, and still more destructive to the Church, remember that Erasmus foretold them. In the first place, they should have let alone Luther and his theses about indulgences,* and not have poured oil upon the flame. Then it was a great mistake to take action by means of monks, whom almost every one hates, and to have recourse to impotent bellowings among the people, and to the burning of men and books: the true course would have been to deal with the matter at issue in treatises to be circulated among the learned. Lastly, it would have been better to connive at, to put up with these people, just as we have put up with gipsies and Jews. Time itself often brings a cure for evils beyond the power of medicine. This I never cease to urge; but I did not even obtain a hearing: whether I liked it or not, I was set down as a supporter of schisms." †

The imputation was utterly unfounded. Erasmus never for one moment thought of joining Luther or of quitting the communion of Rome. He had no taste for martyrdom, but he protested—and his

* Froude translates (p. 347): "The first mistake was to neglect Luther's protest against indulgences," which is precisely the contrary of what Erasmus says. A little lower down in Froude's translation we read: "Luther's books were burnt when they ought to have been read and studied by earnest and serious people." There is not one word of this in the original.

† Ep. MXCIV.

sincerity is unquestionable—that he "would rather die ten times over than associate himself with any sect seceding from the Church." * On the other hand, he was as little disposed to make common cause with Luther's enemies, who were also the enemies of that "good learning" which it was the main business of his life to advance, the fautors of and traders in those superstitions and corruptions against which, from first to last, he waged such vigorous war. He speaks, in a letter written to Pirckheimer in 1522, of the age as a monstrous epoch ("seculum prodigiosum"), in which it was most difficult to know what course to take. On the one hand, were those "who, acting in the name of the Pope, were trying to draw tighter the bonds of the old tyranny, instead of relaxing them." "On the other hand," he continues, "those who, under the name of Luther, profess to vindicate Evangelical liberty, act in I know not what spirit. Certainly many adhere to them whom I should not like to have as adherents if the matter were any affair of mine. Meanwhile," he adds, "Christian charity is rent asunder, consciences are troubled, and the lewdly disposed ("qui propensi sunt suapte natura ad licentiam") easily find pretexts for licence in the writings of Luther." † "Good Erasmus in an

* Ep. MLXXXV.

† Ep. DCXVIII. The words, "Rursus qui sub nomine Lutheri præ se ferunt vindicationem Evangelicæ libertatis, nescio quo

honest mean," sings Pope, justly enough. But his moderation seemed, to the followers of Luther, cowardice; to Luther's most active opponents, hypocrisy. Foremost among his detractors was his old friend Aleander, who as Papal Legate brought to Germany the Bull against Luther, and whose violence did much to aggravate the situation. * It was a special infelicity of his position, as he complains in several of his letters, that this old familiar friend in whom he trusted, who also did eat of his bread and drink of his cup in those bright Venetian days, laid great wait for him, adopting and enforcing the accusations of the monks and theologians that he was the real author of Luther's revolt—nay, that he still secretly favoured and promoted it—and losing no opportunity of putting that view before the Pope. Aleander it probably was who coined the saying, 'Ο Λουθηρὸς ἐρασμίζει, ὁ 'Ερασμὸς λουθηρίζει. Certainly at this period Erasmus's worst foes were those of his own household. In 1521 the feeling of his monkish and

spiritu rem gerunt: certe multi se admiscent qui malim non admiscere si meum esset negotium," are grotesquely translated by Froude: "The friends of liberty who call themselves Lutherans are possessed by some spirit, of what kind I know not, while both sorts have a finger in the management of things, which neither of them should touch if I could have my way" (p. 280). "In suspenso sunt hominum conscientiæ" he renders "conscience has run wild"!

* "Præclarum facinus sibi facere videbatur ille διπλωματοφόρος, qui quacunque iret Carolus, cha rum fumis et incendiis implebat omnia, nulli non minitans." (Ep. MXCIV.)

theological opponents in Flanders, where he had chiefly resided for the previous five years, was so strong against him that he thought it expedient to depart, and took up his residence at Basle.

Here he was soon pressed, by Catholic princes and prelates from all quarters—nay, by his old friend Adrian of Utrecht, who, on the death of Leo X. in 1520, was elected to the Papal Chair—to write against Luther. He shrunk from complying with these requests. He felt that if he spoke out his whole mind, some who sought his aid would rather that he had kept silence.* Perhaps, too, like Cardinal Newman upon a well-remembered occasion, he was not without resentment that those who, by their "wild words and overbearing deeds," had kindled the fire in spite of his warnings, should "leave to others the task of putting out the flame." But as time went on Luther was led to apply himself to the construction of religious dogmas for his followers. Erasmus viewed the result with disapproval and dismay. It appeared to him that the Reformer's new scholasticism was as bad as, or worse than, the old. In particular he judged Luther's denial of free will as undermining the foundations of ordered human existence. He applied himself to confute it; but he did not like the task. It was—so he

* "Principes omnes hortantur in Lutherum. Ego autem non scribam, aut ita scribam ut qui pugnant pro regno Pharisaico malint me siluisse." (Ep. CCCCLXXI., App.)

expressed himself in one of his letters—as though the lover of the Muses should descend into the gladiatorial arena. But the Peasants' War in 1524 removed his lingering hesitations. This outbreak appeared to him the direct result of Luther's teachings. He sent his book, *De Libero Arbitrio*, to the printer. It appeared in September of that year.

I do not propose to enter here upon a critical examination of this work. Indeed, if judged from a purely metaphysical point of view, it can hardly be said to merit such examination. I may content myself with observing that its dialectic, if not very profound, is skilful and learned; that it deals with the great question it discusses in a spirit of Christian courtesy and philosophical moderation; that it expresses effectively the dictates of common sense and the determinations of conscience against Luther's fatalism. Luther himself felt that it went to the very heart of his doctrine. He confesses as much in the book, *De Servo Arbitrio*, which he wrote in reply. That treatise is not very creditable to him. His argument is weak. He seeks to bolster it up by vituperation and violence. He describes Erasmus as an impious person, a blasphemer, an unbeliever, an Epicurean; one who fears to displease the powerful, who puts his word and his faith at the disposal of princes. Luther's followers took their cue from their master. They had been wont to celebrate the great Humanist as

the Prince of Literature, the Star of Germany, the Avenger of the ancient theology. Sceptic, Atheist, Arian, Pelagian, were the terms they now applied to him. On the other hand, the monks likened him to a fox laying waste the vineyard of the Lord. They called him another and a worse Lucian, who by his bitter mocking had done more harm to the faith than Luther himself. We read of a certain Doctor of Divinity who kept his picture on purpose to have the pleasure of spitting upon it from time to time. His *Colloquies*, which appeared in the same year * as his book, *De Libero Arbitrio*, were not calculated to conciliate his monastic and theological opponents. Feugère observes: "L'ouvrage, en effet, donnait prise par bien de côtés à ceux qui le poursuivaient au nom de la foi Catholique. Dans ces pages alertes il y a des saillies moqueuses, des irrévérences à la Lucien." † The popularity of the book was

* A few of them had been previously published.

† P. 122. Erasmus maintained with some warmth that he had ridiculed in his work, not the precepts or practices of the Church, but only the superstitions engrafted on them. He writes to Tonstall in 1530: "Qui dicunt me ridere Christiana jejunia, pia vota, ecclesiasticas ceremonias, abstinentias ciborum ab Ecclesia præscriptas, invocationes Divorum, et perigrinationes religionis ergo susceptas, ut simpliciter et compendio dicam, ἀτέχνως mentiuntur. Superstitionem quorundam in hisce rebus, derideo, juro optimo ridendam." (Ep. MXCII.) In one of his Colloquies—the "Convivium Religiosum" occurs the statement which was thought so shocking that he felt inclined to invoke Socrates as a saint: "Vix mihi tempero quin dicam, *Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis.*'

enormous. The astonishing number of twenty-four thousand copies found purchasers in a few months. Next to the *Praise of Folly*, it is still the best known of his works. Its light and graceful humour, its piquant irony, its keen and subtle delineation of life and character, invest it with a charm which age cannot wither.

Twelve years more of life remained to Erasmus. They were twelve years of unwearied work, of almost uninterrupted physical suffering, and of ever-increasing sadness as the political and religious horizon grew darker and darker. The sort of literary dictatorship which he had once exercised throughout Europe had passed away. But to the last he was the centre and leader of sensible, tolerant, disinterested men, who desired to conciliate piety towards the past with faith in the future; who shrank alike from the obscurantism of the monks and the iconoclasm of Luther. Until the year 1529 he abode in Basle. Then a variety of Lutheranism, devised by Œcolampadius, was established there. The Catholic worship was prohibited. And the intolerance of Protestant zealots enforced him to quit that city;* just as, eight years before, the intolerance of Catholic zealots had driven him from Louvain. Much as he desired

* "Mihi vertendum solum, . . . quandoquidem hic manere, ubi nec sacrificare licet, nec Corpus Domini conficere, nihil aliud sit quam profiteri quod isti profitentur." (Ep. MXXXIII.)

the abolition of abuses, he was by no means in sympathy with those who—

> "call the Church's desolation
> A godly, thorough reformation."

In his letters of this period he vividly depicts their ravages: statues shattered, shrines rifled, altars cast down, paintings whitewashed, all that was precious and beautiful defiled and destroyed.* The sour solemnities which they substituted for the ancient rites he viewed with disdain and dislike. Some of the leaders of the new faith were among his personal friends, and he never renounced their friendship. But the practical fruits of their movement, in the rank and file of their followers, filled him with dismay and disgust. "The triumph of the Lutherans," he writes, "is the death of good learning. Wealth and wives are their real objects. For the rest, their gospel supplies them with all they want—that is, permission to live as they like."† Times of revolution are always times of relaxed morals. It is notable that, of all the sectaries of that period, the Anabaptists seem to have been the purest livers.‡ From Basle Erasmus

* But bitterly as he felt these things, his mocking humour would out. "It is a wonder," he says, "the Saints did not intervene with one of those miracles of which, in former times, they were prodigal, when much less grievously offended." (Ep. MXLVIII.)

† Ep. MVI.

‡ "Anabaptistæ . . . vitæ innocentia præ ceteris commendantur.' (Ep. MXXXIII.)

went to Freiburg, which he reached at the end of April or the beginning of May, 1529. On arriving there, he found a rumour current of his own decease. He writes: "This is not altogether a lie of the Dominicans and the Franciscans. I am struggling with that sergeant of death, the stone; to say nothing of old age—which, indeed, does not give me much to complain of—or of my excessive literary work, or of my constant fighting with beasts of all kinds that everywhere raise their monstrous heads. I know not whether such an existence should be called life. But all this would not trouble me were it not that in these days I see everything going from bad to worse. I hear the voices of orthodox and of heretics, of Catholics and of anti-Catholics: nowhere do I see Christ. For a long time the world has been in travail. Unless the hand of Christ directs the birth, I discern no hope." * To that hope he clings till the last, labouring in all ways to make straight the paths for a better order, in which peace through the truth might be realized; willing to become all things to all men, † so that he might gain them for this sacred cause.

To the last he trusted that it might be still possible to stem the tide of revolution by reform,

* Ep. MCL.

† "Mos gerendus est huic sæculo *συκοφαντικωτάτω*, et Paulus nobis, qua licet, imitandus est, qui omnia fiebat omnibus, ut omnes lucrifaceret." (*Ibid.*)

to reconcile ecclesiastical unity with rational liberty. Melanchthon, one of the purest and most candid souls in the Lutheran ranks, earnestly seconded him in these efforts.* One of his last works was his little tractate, *De Amabili Ecclesiæ Concordia*, a beautiful and touching plea for peace. It was published in 1533, three years before his death. If carefully and dispassionately read—and especially if read in connection with his letters—it leaves no room for doubt as to his religious views. On the one hand, he did not call in question any dogma actually defined by the Church.†

* "Encouragé par Erasme, dont plusieurs fois il réclama l'intervention officieuse auprès des légats du pape et de l'empereur lui-même, il se montrait disposé à toutes les concessions qui pouvaient, pensait-il, rapprocher les esprits sincères. Il offrait les garanties nécessaires au rétablissement de la dignité épiscopale, il écrivit au Cardinal Campège qu'il était prêt, si la *Confession* [d'Augsbourg] était admise ou seulement tolérée, à reconnaître l'autorité universelle du pontife romain. Dans la *Confession* même, il s'était visiblement écarté de la doctrine de Luther, en admettant le libre arbitre 'quant à la justice civile et au bien naturel,' et se bornant à maintenir que sans le Saint Esprit l'homme ne peut faire ce qui est juste devant Dieu. Mais, sans rapprocher les adversaires, Mélanchthon se rendait ainsi suspect à son propre parti. On l'y accusait de donner des conseils Érasmiques." (Feugère, p. 165.)

† Readers of Froude's "abridged translation" of Ep. DLXIII. might suppose otherwise (p. 260): "I think the Church has defined many points which might have been left open without hurt to the faith." On reference to the original it will be seen that Erasmus speaks not of definitions of the Church, but of definitions of certain Theologians: "Fateor quædam esse definita per Theologos quosdam," &c.

But, like Cardinal Newman, he protested against theologians who sought to impose as articles of faith their own opinions; who made use of their own private judgment to anathematise the private judgment of others. It must be remembered that, when he wrote, many points subsequently decided by the Council of Trent were open questions. It must be remembered, too, that while in his discussions of theological subjects he is perfectly frank, stating fully the arguments on both sides, extenuating no difficulties, concealing no apparent contradictions, and not dissembling his own conclusions if he is led to any, or his doubts if he is not, he invariably submits himself to the authority of the Holy See.* His own view was that the dogmas of the faith should be few and plain. He would have had theology brought back from scholastic subtilty to Evangelical simplicity. He would have had fewer and better priests, fewer and better monks. He earnestly desired the abatement of the corruptions, the abuses, the superstitions, which he combated so vigorously from first to last. But anything seemed to him a less evil than the breaking up of the religious unity of Europe. To Catholics he preached conciliation; to Lutherans, moderation. In vain. He might

* He wrote to Clement VII. in 1524: "Ego semper me meaque omnia submisi judicio Romanæ ecclesiæ, non repugnaturus, etiamsi iniquam de me ferat sententiam; nam omnia patiar potius quam ut sim seditiosus." (Ep. DCCXX.) This sentiment ever animated him.

have said with the Psalmist, "I labour for peace; but when I speak unto them thereof, they make themselves ready to battle."

The battle came. It was his happiness that he did not live to see it. Indeed, his last year of life was gladdened by a gleam of hope that the "amiable peace of the Church," for which he laboured, might even yet be achieved. In 1534 the troubled pontificate of Clement VII. came to an end. Erasmus had little cause to complain of that Pope. Like Leo and Adrian, Clement, too, in his feeble and irresolute way, had protected the great Humanist. Paul III., immediately after his election, had announced his intention of calling a General Council in order to the pacification of the Church. In view of it, he proposed to raise to the Cardinalate learned and pious men in various countries. Among them was Erasmus, to whom, in reply to a congratulatory letter upon his accession, he had addressed a very complimentary brief. Such an honour had never been in the thoughts of Erasmus. It was out of keeping with his antecedents. He wrote to the Bishop of Cracow * that it would be like saddling an ox. He was much gratified at this token of the Pope's good dispositions towards him—"Pontificis animum lubens amplector." It was a recognition of his labours for and his loyalty to the Church. It was of good omen for the cause of reform and com-

* Ep. MCCLXXXVIII.

prehension to which he had devoted his life. But old age, want of fortune, a state of health quite incompatible with the due discharge of a Cardinal's duties,* were sufficient reasons for declining it. "Animalculum ἡμερόβιον,"—"a wretched little creature with but a day's life in him"—he calls himself in his usual mocking way. It was true. The end was near; nearer perhaps than he supposed. Of late his infirmities and sufferings had greatly increased. His physicians, at their wits' end, prescribed change of air. In June, 1535, he left Freiburg, intending, as would appear, to proceed eventually to Besançon. He set out in a litter—for the last year or two he had been obliged to give up riding—and in a few days reached Basle, where he proposed to halt for some time in order to see an edition of his *Ecclesiastes* through the press.† Shortly his sickness increased so much that he determined to winter there. The place was dear to him from the recollection of many years of fruitful toil passed within its walls; of many tried and valued friends, some of whom still remained. So, as he told Goclenius in the last letter ‡ he ever wrote, he had made up his mind to winter there. He would rather die elsewhere, he added, because of theological differences. But it was appointed unto him to die there and not elsewhere. The exercise of the Catholic

* "Valetudo parum utilis obeundis ecclesiæ negotiis." (*Ibid.*)

† Ep. MCCLXXXIV. ‡ Ep. MCCXCIX.

religion was interdicted. Erasmus passed away on July 12, 1536, without the last Sacraments of the Church which he had so faithfully served. The zealots of her communion, who had thwarted and marred the work of his life, called it an ill death. He had answered them by anticipation in wise and pious words, written twelve years before: "God knows what is best for each. . . . Let Him choose what He will. No one can die badly who has lived well." *

VI.

And now let us briefly consider what is the debt of the modern world to this memorable man. I think it not too much to say that he was the educator of Europe in "good letters." He apprehended, more than any one else, the true significance of the Renaissance as an intellectual movement; and, more than any one else, by his opulent mental endowments, by his personal and literary ubiquity, he made of it the instrument of liberal culture for the civilized world. Few of the Italian Humanists were more than mere pedants. The line of Pope—

> "Words are man's province, words alone we teach,"

is exactly descriptive of them, with hardly an exception. But Erasmus went far beyond this mere

* Ep. DCLXXI.

verbal scholarship, in the extravagances of which he discerned a fit subject for his mordant wit.* It may be said of him, as Berni said of Michael Angelo: "Ei dice cose." His study of classical literature—*bonæ litteræ*, he called it—revealed to him a whole cycle of ideas. Of that literature and those ideas he was the apostle whose sound went out into all the world. On that literature and those ideas are based the higher education of Europe, as it has lasted unto this day.

This was his great work, entitling him to be regarded as the typical man of letters of the Renaissance. He used "the new learning" to liberalize the mind of Europe. The end of education, as he well discerned, is not propriety of speech, or even elegance of diction, but the enlargement and perfection of the intellect by freeing it from prejudice, passion, and partiality; by

* See especially his *Dialogus Ciceronianus*, where, among other amusing things, he tells us of his attending the Papal Chapel to hear a sermon delivered before Julius II., and a congregation chiefly of distinguished ecclesiastics, on Good Friday. The preacher began with a panegyric on the Pope whom he qualified as Jupiter Tonans, hurling from his potent hand the thunderbolt of war, and shaking the earth by his nod. The Decius, Curtius, Regulars—even Iphigenia, were introduced to illustrate the Sacrifice of the Cross, and parallels were drawn between Socrates, Epaminondus, Phocion, Scipio, and the Author of Christianity, who, however, was not expressly named, the word "Jesus" not being in the Ciceronian vocabulary, to which the reverend orator strictly confined himself.

disciplining it in accuracy and acuteness. Of such education he deemed the ancient classics, especially the Greek, an incomparable instrument. And he was right. Homer and Pindar, and the Tragedians, Aristotle and Plato and Thucydides, are the world's perpetual schoolmasters. Great is the Divine in them, which age cannot touch. And those noble Latin writers, who were their scholars, carried on their intellectual tradition—a tradition which preserved throughout the centuries the great outlines of knowledge and the immortal principles on which it rests. In ancient classical literature we have not only the original source, but the perpetual fount of the highest culture. True indeed is it that to us there are open other founts of it, which the men of the sixteenth century did not possess. Lessing and Heine, Goethe and Schiller in Germany, Shakespere and Milton, Dryden and Pope, Wordsworth and Shelley, Tennyson and Browning in England—to speak only of the highest names—are also classics, and they are of the house and lineage of those in whose speech they wrote: bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. Our modern culture is wider—and, alas! is in consequence more superficial. But still the ancient masters, with their supreme perfection of form, with their incomparable prodigality and exuberance of wisdom, will never be displaced from their intellectual thrones. They founded the tradition of culture in the Western world. They still dominate it. They ever will.

The world then—to go back to our immediate subject—owes to Erasmus that it has appreciated and appropriated the gift of that liberal culture which the Renaissance brought back to it. But liberal culture must have a philosophic basis. The very word liberty implies as much. For it is ever true that liberty dwells with right reason. Now, unquestionably, Erasmus, more than any one else in the sixteenth century, vindicated the essential and inalienable prerogatives of human reason. Müller complains of him as "a rationalizing (*raissonnirenden*) theologian." He was that, in the best sense of the word. Here, as Nisard has pointed out, in a trenchant sentence, is the difference between him and Luther. "Erasmus addressed himself to men's intellects; Luther to their passions." It was in the name of reason that Erasmus annihilated the effete scholasticism of the Middle Ages. It was in the name of reason that he attacked Luther's new scholasticism based upon the doctrine of the slavery of the will. It was in the name of reason that he waged war upon the stupid superstition and dull despotism of degenerate monachism. It was in the name of reason that he opposed alike religious persecution and sects and schisms; that he pleaded for candid and moderate discussion—not rigour, not violence—as the proper weapons wherewith to combat error; that, as he finely says in one of his letters—the sentiment must

have seemed passing strange to most of his generation—he pronounced "the man who errs in good faith, an object of pity." In every department of his intellectual activity there breathes, not the atmosphere of sectarian bitterness in which Luther lived, but the ampler ether, the diviner air of rational freedom.

And so in his philosophy, his moral philosophy, which guided and informed his intellectual activity —"philosophia dux vitæ"—the starting-point is reason speaking through conscience. As the Middle Ages drew to their close, the conception of the moral law as an order of verities, absolute and eternal, had been largely effaced. In the hands of the later scholastics, ethical science was little more than a system of casuistry. Now no man who knows what he is talking about will deny that casuistry has its quite legitimate uses. As undeniable are its quite illegitimate abuses. By misapplied subtilties, by nice or nasty distinctions, by the exclusive employment of logic as the sole guide of life, those who cultivated casuistry in the fifteenth century had well-nigh achieved the petrification of the moral idea. Luther did nothing to vivify it. Indeed the inevitable effect of his doctrine of the absolute slavery and nullity of the human will, was to reduce morality to a department of police. Erasmus saw, clearly, that ethics rest on self-evident principles and the nature of things, and on rational deductions therefrom. It was reserved

for the great moralists of a later generation—Suarez and Vasquez are conspicuous among them—to vindicate, scientifically, this primary verity. But Erasmus indicated the true way. Here, as in the domain of religious toleration, he is the precursor of a better age. Not in the storm of theological controversy, not in the earthquake of religious revolution, but in the still small voice of reason speaking through conscience, do we discern the promise and presage of the liberties of the modern world.

CHAPTER IV.

REUCHLIN—THE SAVANT.

I.

From Erasmus, the representative man of letters, we will go on to Reuchlin, the representative *savant* of the Renaissance. Like Erasmus, and, indeed, like all who played a prominent part in those polemical times, his character and work have been singularly obscured by the fierce religious controversies which surged around him. The theological dust had now long fallen; and in what I am about to write I shall endeavour not to disturb it. I shall first present a brief sketch of Reuchlin's career. And then I shall endeavour to estimate its real significance in the dry light of secular history.

The chief authority for Reuchlin's life is Geiger's admirable work; far and away the best and completest biography of him; superseding, I may indeed say, all his former biographies, and not likely to be superseded by any subsequent one. It

is a monument of careful and conscientious research, and in this chapter I shall fully avail myself of it: a general acknowledgment of indebtedness which may dispense me and my readers from the trouble of constant references. To Geiger's laborious diligence we owe, too, a collection of Reuchlin's correspondence—incomplete, indeed, but still extremely valuable; and the forty-five letters which Horawitz has printed—forty-two of them are published for the first time—form a welcome supplement to it. The importance of letters, as documents of history for the period with which we are now concerned, is not easily overrated. I need hardly observe how much to illustrate Reuchlin's life is to be found in the vast correspondence of his famous contemporaries, and especially of Erasmus and Luther, of Hutten and Melanchthon. In English, I grieve to say, there is little of much value regarding Reuchlin. More than half a century ago Mr. Barham published a *Life* of him, which is, chiefly, a loose, and not always a very intelligible translation of Meyerhoff's superficial, inaccurate, and sectarian work. In Bishop Creighton's *History of the Papacy*, the outlines of his career are given with clearness and candour, and some excellent pages about him will be found in Beard's *Life of Luther*. In Froude's *Life and Letters of Erasmus* there occurs the following passage concerning him — perhaps the most

astonishing passage ever indited by that astonishing Professor of Modern History :—

"Reuchlin was born at Baden, in 1455. He came early under the notice of the Emperor Maximilian, who assisted and encouraged him. The jealousy of Hebrew among the clergy extended to the Hebrew race. A Jew-baiting cry was easily raised, and the orthodox German Church began to demand, through the mouth of a convert (Pfefferkorn), that all Hebrew books, except the Bible, should be burned. Reuchlin induced Maximilian to suspend so absurd a proposal. The Dominicans, who hated Reuchlin already, turned upon him, denounced a passage in one of his writings as heretical to the Inquisition, and the Inquisition, if it could not burn the *Talmud*, was willing to take Reuchlin in exchange. Young Germany, led by Ulrich von Hutten, swore that if Reuchlin was burnt, the Church should smoke for it. The Emperor could not afford to quarrel with the Inquisition. Reuchlin was suspended from his office and imprisoned, while the question, What was to be done with him, was referred to the Pope."

Ordinarily, it is the task of a critic to note any error into which his author may have fallen. But in the case of Froude the problem ever is to discover whether he has deviated into truth. This passage contains one, and only one, correct statement: that as to the date of Reuchlin's birth. He *was* born in 1455. But he was *not* born at Baden. He did *not* come early under the notice of the Emperor Maximilian. That potentate did *not* assist and encourage him. The jealousy of the Hebrew race among the clergy—whatever that may mean—was *not* an extension of their jealousy of Hebrew. A Jew-baiting cry was *not*

raised upon the occasion in question. The orthodox German Church did *not* demand, through the mouth of Pfefferkorn, that all Hebrew books, except the Bible, should be burnt. Reuchlin did *not* induce Maximilian to suspend that proposal. The Dominicans did *not* already hate Reuchlin, who had been their faithful and trusted proctor for long years. They did *not* denounce a passage in one of his writings to the Inquisition. The Inquisition, which could have burnt the *Talmud* if it had chosen, did *not* express a willingness to take Reuchlin in exchange. Young Germany—whatever that may have been—did *not* swear the oath alleged: no one did. The Emperor Maximilian did *not* decline a quarrel with the Inquisition: there was never any thought of such a quarrel. Reuchlin was *not* suspended from any of his offices. Reuchlin was *not* imprisoned. The question what to do with Reuchlin was *not* referred to the Pope.

II.

It was on the 22nd of February, 1455, that John Reuchlin was born at Pforzheim. All his life long he retained a deep love for the place, and was in the habit of describing himself as a native of it (Phorcensis). Of his parents little is known except that they were reputable people (*ehrsame Leute*), and that his father was bailiff or steward

of the Dominican convent there. The town possessed an unusually good grammar school, at which he received the first rudiments of his education. In May, 1470, he was entered at the University of Freiburg, founded fourteen years before by the Archduke Albert. A great career lay before the new seat of learning. But in Reuchlin's undergraduate days it was as yet unvisited by

> "The spirit of the years to come
> Yearning to mix himself with Life."

The medieval tradition still dominated it. And Reuchlin's chief gain from the time—between two and three years—which he spent there, was the advancement of his Latin scholarship. He appears to have been endowed with a musical ear and with a voice apt for singing. And, upon his return to his native town, these gifts won for him a place among the Court choristers of the reigning Margrave of Baden-Durlach, Charles I. Soon he attracted attention by his intellectual alertness and his proficiency in Latin, and was chosen as travelling companion to the Margrave's third son Frederick, a youth of pleasing character, who was destined to the ecclesiastical state, and who afterwards became Bishop of Utrecht. He travelled to Paris with his princely charge, who was a few years older than himself. They remained for rather more than a year in that city, which was

reputed to contain three hundred thousand inhabitants, and which was the intellectual centre of Europe. There he was fortunate enough to find as his teacher the celebrated Johannes a Lapide, a German by birth—Johann Heynlin von Stein was his real name—who, after fruitful studies in Leipzig and Freiburg, had become Rector of the University in the French capital. A learned, eloquent, and capable man was this Johannes a Lapide; one of the last considerable masters of the medieval school, but zealous for the new learning, and a moral force of much power. Here began Reuchlin's study of the Greek tongue, in which he was afterwards to attain so great proficiency. Here began, too, his friendship with Rudolph Agricola: a friendship unbroken and undimmed till the death of that remarkable man. From Paris Reuchlin followed Johannes a Lapide to Basle. This was in 1474. There he obtained instruction in Greek from Andronikus Contoblakas, and soon made sufficient progress to write a letter in that language. He took the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Basle in 1475, and the degree of Master in 1477.

It was at that time that Reuchlin began his career of authorship by publishing a sort of Latin Dictionary, *Vocabularius Breviloquus*, a work of which the superiority to its predecessors consists, as Geiger observes, in this: that instead of being a mere Concordance to the Vulgate and the

Septuagint, it professes to embrace the whole wealth of the Latin language stored up in classic and jurisprudential writers. Of course Reuchlin by no means completely transcended the traditional standpoint, as is shown in the fearful and wonderful things he gives by way of etymology. Thus, he derives "uterus ab utendo," or "ab utilitate"; "biblia" from "biblos," or "bibo"; "castra" from "casa alta"; "barbarismus," he tells us, "= barba, ars, mos"; and "centauri," he opines, "= gentauri," *i.e.*, "geniti ex aura." Still, the work was a most remarkable one for a boy of twenty, and a promise, amply to be fulfilled, of his future erudition.

In 1477, towards the end of the year apparently, Reuchlin left Basle and went to Paris, where he vigorously prosecuted his Hellenic studies under George Hermonymus of Sparta. It was from this teacher that he learnt to write fluently the Greek character: a valuable accomplishment in those days, by means of which he was enabled to add considerably to his scanty income. And now it was necessary for him to choose his career in life. He determined to give himself to jurisprudence, and proceeded to Orleans, where there was a famous school of the Civil Law, and where in 1479 he took his degree of Bachelor in that Faculty. Thence he proceeded to pursue his studies at Poitiers. There, on the 14th of July, 1481, he received his diploma as Licentiate, after which he delivered a few public lectures.

Reuchlin now returned to Germany, and found himself once more in his native place, which he had left eight years before. After a stay of a few months there, he betook himself to the neighbouring town of Tübingen where, four years before, a University had been founded by Eberhard the Bearded, Count of Würtemberg, a wise, pious, and valiant prince. Men of distinction had been attracted thither by the munificence of Eberhard, who, although no scholar himself, loved to be surrounded by learned men. Among those who had accepted professorships at Tübingen were Conrad Summerhart, of note as a theologian and a preacher, and one of the first Germans to attempt the study of Hebrew; Gabriel Biel, the most highly esteemed exponent then living of the scholastic philosophy; and John Vergenhans (Naukler), distinguished as a jurist, a historian, and an administrator. Perhaps Reuchlin thought of teaching there in his own Faculty of the Civil Law. But it was otherwise ordered. His fluency in speaking and writing Latin, and his familiarity with the mode of pronouncing it current in France and Italy, led Count Eberhard to employ him as private secretary or interpreter. In that capacity he accompanied the Count to Italy in the early part of the year 1482. In March they reached Rome, where Eberhard received from the reigning Pontiff, Sixtus IV., the honour of The Golden Rose. It was under this Pope—a poor

Franciscan friar suddenly called to the Apostolic Throne—that the Renaissance culminated in Rome. His chief pleasure was in a brilliant literary Court, and he attracted to the Papal city, from all quarters, the chiefs of the new learning. Conspicuous among them was Johannes Argyropulos, the most highly gifted among the Greek immigrants, whom he had won from the service of the Medici by great promises and pensions. Reuchlin, who is said to have surprised and delighted Sixtus by a polished Latin oration, was among the audience that attended the lectures of Argyropulos, and surprised, but did not delight, that scholar by a fluent off-hand translation of a difficult passage of Thucydides into Latin. "Ah," the chagrined Hellenist is reported to have exclaimed, "through our banishment, Greece has flown over the Alps."

On returning to Germany, Reuchlin abode in Stuttgart, where Eberhard ordinarily resided. In 1482 he became assessor to the Supreme Court there. About the same time he took his degree of Doctor of the Civil Law, and married. The next year he was chosen by the Dominican Order as their proctor, not only for Swabia but for the whole of Germany, "which office," writes a contemporary historian, "he discharged for twenty-nine years with great integrity, and without any hope of gain." Thenceforth till the death of Eberhard the Bearded, in 1495, he was employed

by that prince in many arduous and honourable public affairs. Thus, in 1486, he went as one of the Count's representatives upon the occasion of the election of Maximilian, son of the Emperor Frederick, as King of the Romans, by the Diet held at Frankfort, whence he proceeded to Aachen to be present at the inunction and coronation ceremony. In 1492 he was sent to Italy, as guide, philosopher, and friend to Ludwig, a natural son of Eberhard, and a youth of much intellectual promise. It was then that he adopted the Hellenized form of his name, probably at the suggestion of the eminent scholar Hermolaus Barbarus, who was there as Ambassador from Venice, and whose acquaintance he had made at Frankfort in the preceding year. Henceforward he was usually addressed as Capnion by his learned correspondents, though he personally preferred, and habitually used, his German appellation. It was now, too, that some personal intercourse took place between him and Pico della Mirandola; slight indeed, but destined deeply to influence his future studies. Another friend—true and tried in the troubles of after years—whom he made at this time, was Jacob Aurelius von Questemberg, a Saxon, who held the important and influential appointment of Papal Private Secretary.

This second visit of Reuchlin to Italy is stated to have lasted for nearly a year. He did

not stay long at Stuttgart upon his return, but was despatched to the Imperial Court at Linz to procure the Emperor Frederick's sanction of the compact—the details of which need not detain us here—made between Count Eberhard and his kinsman and successor of the same name, for assuring the integrity of the Würtemberg territory. He successfully accomplished his mission, and received singular marks of the Kaiser's favour and esteem. He was ennobled, advanced to the dignity of Pfalzgrave, empowered to name as notaries-public any persons whom he judged competent for the office, and to create ten Doctors of the Law. Here he made the acquaintance of a learned Jew, Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, from whom he obtained some instruction in Hebrew, the study of which he had already begun. Loans was a man of great learning and probity, and Reuchlin conceived for him a true esteem, and, indeed, we may say affection. "Valde doctus homo, humanissimus preceptor meus, doctor excellens," he calls him in the *Rudimenta Hebraica*. "Misericordia Dei veniat super eum," he adds after mentioning his name in another part of that work. It is a Latin rendering of the phrase used by the Hebrew people when speaking of the departed, and we may infer from it that in 1506, when the words were written, this excellent person, who unfortunately is but a name to us, was no more.

Reuchlin now pursued his Hebrew studies with the greatest ardour. Lack of books, lack of teachers, lack of time—for his public occupations left him scanty leisure—might well have discouraged him. These difficulties, however, were to him

> "nought else
> But the protractive trials of great Jove
> To find persistive constancy in men."

They served only to excite him to greater diligence. During the last decade of the fifteenth and the first of the sixteenth centuries, his intellectual activity was prodigious. He appears to have acquired a competent knowledge of the Hebrew tongue in a singularly short space of time. He at once devoted it to the mystic studies which he had learned from Pico della Mirandola to esteem so highly, and applied himself to unlock the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which he supposed to be contained in the *Cabbalah*. In 1494 he published the first fruits of his labours in his treatise, *De Verbo Mirifico*, an attempt, of which I shall speak later on, to give a Christian interpretation to the religious philosophy of the Hebrews.

And now the tranquil tenor of Reuchlin's life was to be interrupted. In 1496, his princely patron Eberhard—advanced to the ducal dignity in the previous year by the Emperor Maximilian—died, and Eberhard the Younger became Duke of

Würtemberg. The new sovereign's chief Minister was the Augustinian monk, Holzinger. Reuchlin had been instrumental in procuring his imprisonment under Eberhard the Bearded, and now, not unnaturally, dreaded his vengeance. He thought it safer, and so did his friends, that he should quit Stuttgart. He betook himself to Heidelberg. There he had a friend and protector in John von Dalberg, Bishop of Worms, and Chancellor of the University, a cultivated prelate, under whose patronage Rudolph Agricola had spent his latter days, dying not long before Reuchlin's arrival. But the illustrious Wimpheling was still there, strenuously engaged in those endeavours for the promotion of liberal studies which had won for him the title of Educator of Germany. And around him were gathered many disciples of the "new learning," of less account than he, indeed, but full of zeal and energy.

Here Reuchlin was introduced to the Elector Palatine Philip, who delighted in the fresh intellectual life of the place: was nominated by him a member of his Council for one year, with a hundred gold gulden as salary, two horses, and a Court dress: and was further appointed chief instructor of his children. Reuchlin's Privy Councillorship was no sinecure. He was soon employed upon diplomatic business. Philip required a Papal dispensation for the marriage of his son Rupert to a kinswoman

within the prohibited degrees. He required also the removal of the Papal ban, which had fallen upon him by reason of the violent proceedings of one of his vassals against a certain abbot. Reuchlin was sent as ambassador to the Pope to arrange these matters. The mission was successfully accomplished. It lasted, apparently, for four or five months, during which Reuchlin applied such leisure as he could command to the prosecution of his Hebrew studies under the learned Jew, Obadiah Sforno. By the end of the year 1498 he was again in Stuttgart, where a pacific revolution had deposed Eberhard the Younger, and had instituted a Council of Regency during the minority of his successor, Duke Ulrich. Reuchlin's friends at Heidelberg endeavoured to induce him to return thither; but in vain. His home and his interests were at Stuttgart. And there an honour, higher than any he had as yet received, awaited him. In 1502, the princes of the Swabian Confederation appointed him Confederate Judge—"Cæsariæ majestatis, archiducis Austriæ, illustrissimorum imperii electorum et cæterorum principum in Confederatione Sueviæ judex ordinarius." He held this important and dignified office for eleven years.

But while discharging his public duties in a way which filled "the lips of men with honest praise," Reuchlin laboured with unremitting zeal for the advancement of sound learning. He did much to

diffuse the study of Greek, and introduced the pronunciation of it which he had learned from his Hellenic teachers, and which was called after his name. He did still more to promote the study of Hebrew. His *Rudimenta Hebraica*, published in 1506, was indeed a remarkable work, composed, as he tells us, "multo sudore et algore, prece, premio, et pretio, per longa tempora." He was justly proud of it, and was well warranted in calling it "monumentum ære perennius." I shall have to touch later on upon its value and significance.

III.

Reuchlin's profound Hebrew studies had engendered in him a milder and more tolerant feeling than was common at this time towards the Hebrew people. And the scientific cast of his intellect, prompting the search for truth wherever it might be found, and the love of truth for its own sake, was alien from the dark dogmatism prevailing around him, which found in the Jews its favourite victims. Perhaps there is nothing in all history more pathetic than the position of that race during the Middle Ages.*

* I need hardly refer to the fine passage in *Ueber Deutschland*, in which Heine speaks of the Jews guarding, through those terrible Middle Ages, their Sacred Books: "Like a ghost that keeps watch over a treasure formerly entrusted to it in its

Amid the crumbling away of the old civilization with the Pax Romana which had maintained it, amid the growth of the new nations destined to constitute the modern world, the children of Israel clung with faith unfailing to tribal traditions long anterior to the Semitic migration into Canaan, and to a religious creed far older than the date usually assigned to the eponym Abraham. Everywhere exiles and everywhere at home, unassimilated during all those centuries by the general life of the cities where they dwelt, they yet vastly influenced it by their mastery of money, by their philosophical speculations, by their scientific attainments. And during all those centuries, they were an object of mingled terror and contempt to the professors of the dominant creed, undeniably the offspring, and claiming to be the complement of their own. Popular superstition, venting itself in paroxysms of sanguinary persecution, which Popes and Saints in vain endeavoured to restrain, sought, from time to time, to make a perpetual end of them. But the life of the race, however maimed and marred, has defied the most atrocious cruelties of its Christian assailants :—

> "it is as the air invulnerable,
> And our vain blows malicious mockery."

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lifetime, so sat this murdered people, this ghost of a people ('dieses gemordete Volk, dieses Volk-Gespenst') in its dark Ghettos, and kept watch there over the Hebrew Bible."

Yes, the people of the Hebrews, during all those ages of rebuke and blasphemy, might well have applied to themselves the words of one of the greatest of their sons: "As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." And, wonderful persistence in mobility, the part they played in terror and concealment during the medieval period, they play openly and without fear in this modern world, upon an ampler stage and with more perfect instruments: dominating whole countries by the power of the purse, and by the power of the press; fulfilling in strange fashion the destiny announced for them by one of their sweet singers: "To be avenged of the Gentiles, and to rebuke the people: to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in links of iron."

But in Reuchlin's time, the old medieval disabilities still pressed heavily upon the Jews. Nor, notwithstanding the mildness of his temper, and the openness of his mind, was he by any means exempt from the popular prejudices against them. That is evident from many places in his writings. He discerned, indeed, and in a striking passage strongly insisted, that the law of charity binding us to love our neighbours as ourselves, extends even to them. He would have their conversion

sought by gentle, not harsh means, "blandimentis non asperitatibus." And his rigid sense of justice obliged him to allow that, if they followed the noxious trade of usury, it was at the request of Christians—"ad petitionem nostram"—and not probably from any evil motive. The deep interest which he took in Hebrew literature extended itself to the Hebrew race, "to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises: whose are the fathers, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." And, in 1505, he published a little treatise, not specially remarkable save as indicating the workings of his mind, under the title *Dr. Johann Reuchlin's tütsch missive warumb die Juden so lang im ellend sind*" —an inquiry into the reason of the calamitous condition of the Jews for so many ages; which reason, of course, he holds to be their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. He ends the work with an invitation to any Jew wanting instruction in Christianity, to come to him for it, at the same time promising to provide for the inquirer's corporal necessities.

It is not recorded that any Hebrew accepted the offer. At all times, save, I suppose, the very primitive times of Christianity, the conversion of an Israelite to that religion has been an undertaking of much difficulty. Even at the present day, with all our resources and appliances

of organisation, converted Jews are the rarest of missionary trophies, and the most expensive. I came, not long ago, upon a statement, apparently the result of careful arithmetical calculations, that the average cost of every convert made by the British Societies which compass sea and land for Hebrew proselytes, is £1,001 0s. 1d. Nor does this somewhat considerable sum ordinarily represent the whole of the expenditure. For, in the majority of cases, the convert once caught, has to be kept: experience proves that there is ever great risk of a relapse. Then, again, the proselytes from Judaism have seldom been quite satisfactory specimens of the seed of Abraham. They have been usually men of dubious antecedents, narrow understanding, scanty culture, and unpleasant personality.

Such an one was John Pfefferkorn, who in 1506 or 1507 was baptized at Cologne, and who forthwith received the appointment of administrator of a hospital there. The new convert proposed to himself, apparently as the chief business of his life, the not very hopeful undertaking of inducing the religionists he had quitted to follow his example. And, without delay, he proceeded to discharge against them controversial works composed, it would seem, in German, and translated for him by various hands into Latin, of which language he was ignorant. The first of these

was entitled *Der Judenspiegel* (the Jews' Mirror), and was published a year after his baptism. In it, while vindicating the Hebrew people from the monstrous charge of sacrificing Christian children, he gave a sufficiently unfavourable account of them, upon the whole, and proposed, in order to their conversion, that they should be interdicted from the trade of money-lending, that they should be compelled to hear Christian sermons, and deprived of the books which were the chief cause of their obduracy. Novelty was not among the merits of these proposals, which had been made time out of mind by medieval theologians and canonists. Pfefferkorn followed up this work by others of a like character, each more violent than its predecessor, and containing nothing worthy of notice here. His literary polemic seems to have been utterly infructuous, and he now determined to seek secular support for the carrying out of his programme. The Dominicans, of whom there were a large number at Cologne, were led by their traditions to sympathize with his ends and with his means. Through their influence he obtained an introduction to the devout Princess Kunigonde, sister of the Emperor Maximilian, and was furnished by her with a letter recommendatory to the Kaiser, then encamped at Padua. Thither he repaired, and obtained an audience of Maximilian. That easily-impressed prince received him favourably, and entrusted to

him a Mandate, requiring the Jews throughout Germany to deliver to him all Hebrew books hostile to the Christian religion or apologetic for their own, and empowering him in the presence of the parish priest and two city councillors, to destroy them at his discretion. This was in 1509.

Pfefferkorn next endeavoured to win the approval and, if possible, the co-operation of Reuchlin in the task which he was about to undertake. But Reuchlin, while desiring the conversion of the Jews, did not, as he subsequently expressed it, "like the look of Pfefferkorn." Nor did the burning of books—time honoured though the practice was—commend itself to him as a rational mode of proselytism. Nay, he characterized it as "a ruffianly argument." Moreover, he found certain legal flaws in the Imperial Mandate, and would in no wise be concerned in its execution. But Pfefferkorn, having at last put his hand to the plough, was not the sort of man to look back. He proceeded to make a visitation of Frankfort and other towns where Jews mostly congregated, and to seize such literature of theirs as he could find. His doings were unfavourably viewed by Archbishop Uriel of Maintz, a cultivated, dignified, and choleric ecclesiastic, who ordered his clergy to have nothing to do with him. Pfefferkorn thereupon repaired to the Archbishop to remonstrate, and that prelate expressed an opinion that others

learned in Hebrew should be asked to co-operate with him. Pfefferkorn suggested Reuchlin. The Archbishop named Victor of Karben, a converted Jew, who had become a priest. A new Mandate was sought from the Emperor in confirmation of this arrangement. It was issued, and committed the management of the business to the Archbishop, who was desired to consult regarding it, not only with Reuchlin and Victor of Karben, but also with Jacob von Hochstraten, the "Inquisitor hereticæ pravitatis" for the dioceses of Cologne, Maintz, and Trier, and with learned men from the universities of Maintz, Cologne, Erfurt, and Heidelberg. The Conference thus ordered never took place: for what reason does not appear. Instead of it, under a further Imperial Mandate, Opinions (*Gutachten*) were submitted by the Universities and the learned persons above mentioned. The University of Maintz thought that all the books of the Jews should be seized and examined, and, especially, that they should be deprived of the *Talmud*, as being the chief hindrance to their conversion. The University of Heidelberg gave a somewhat uncertain sound, and recommended further discussion of the subject. The University of Erfurt would confiscate only those Hebrew writings which reflected injuriously upon Christianity. The University of Cologne would suppress merely the *Talmud*. Hochstraten and Victor of Karben agreed with the University of Cologne.

The elaborate and carefully considered Opinion of Reuchlin deserves more extended notice. It begins by making a clear distinction between those Jewish books which are libellous of Christianity, and those which are not. The *Nizachon* and the *Toldoth Jeschu*, late Rabbinical treatises, are, he judges, of the first class. These he would have destroyed, and their possessors punished. The other Hebrew writings he arranges in six categories. First the *Talmud*, of which, he avows, he knows nothing save what he had gathered from Christian sources; and he thinks that those who desire its destruction know no more. He touches upon the hardness of understanding the book, but holds that, no valid reason for annihilating it. An equally invalid reason, he thinks, is the strange nature of the things it may contain. Superstition, he remarks, must ever be bound up with human reason. The more inept the *Talmud* is, the apter should it render Christians in answering it. The proper course, he holds, is to make the *Talmud* subserve the cause of the Christian faith, in conformity with the precepts of Christ to serve the Jewish scriptures for testimony of Him. He deprecates as divinely forbidden the course of rooting up what we deem evil in order to save ourselves the trouble of combating it.

So much concerning the *Talmud*. Secondly, as to the *Cabbalah*, no defence of it, he thinks, is

required, Pope Sixtus IV. having approved of the use of it made by Pico della Mirandola. Thirdly, the Jewish glosses and commentaries on the Bible should, he urges, by no means be destroyed, but employed for the purpose of Christian exegesis. Fourthly, he would not interfere with the sermon and hymn books of the Jews, as concessions of Popes and Emperors allow of their use in the synagogues. Sixthly, he holds that there is no ground whatever for confiscating their poetical, philosophical, satirical, or scientific works, when there is nothing in these blasphemous of Christianity. He urges that it is absurd to proceed against Jewish books as hostile to the Christian faith, while the heathen literature of Greeks and Romans, which is just as hostile, is endured, nay, cherished; that a Christian has no right to pronounce authoritatively on the religion of Jews, who are not heretics or apostates; that they have rights as fellow-citizens (*Mitbürger*) of the German nation; that the confiscation of their books would not advance their conversion, but produce the contrary effect, and that they would import other copies; that gentle means should be employed to win them, and that Chairs of Hebrew should be founded in the several Universities.

Reuchlin's Opinion is notable for two reasons. In the first place, it is, as Ranke has called it, "a fine monument of clear, good sense and higher insight": "ein schönes Denkmal reiner Gesinnung und

überlegener Einsicht." It manifests a breadth of thought, a candour and moderation, a mild wisdom, rarely met with in that age. It is as a light shining in a dark place ; the pledge, the earnest of the ampler day which was dawning upon the world. But it is notable for another reason. It was the occasion of a controversy which was to rage for ten years, embittering Reuchlin's latter days, splitting Germany, and we may say the whole of European civilization, into two hostile camps, and working, eventually, to issues little dreamed of by those who started it.

Reuchlin's Opinion was written for the information of the Emperor and Archbishop. But it fell into the hands of Pfefferkorn who, naturally enough, was displeased with its tenor as inimical to his crusade, and who specially resented a certain portion of it which reflected upon himself as an ass ignorant of the books which he desired to destroy. He immediately rushed into print, and in his *Handspiegel* (Hand-glass) sought to hold up the mirror to Reuchlin, who is described therein as knowing nothing of Hebrew, as foisting off under his own name books written by others, as covertly attacking the Christian faith, and as bribed by the Jews; in a word, as heterodox and dishonest. These charges Reuchlin could certainly have afforded to disregard. But he did not disregard them. They stung him to the quick, and led him, in his haste, to write in reply his *Augenspiegel*

(Eyeglass), in which he incorporated his Opinion. The *Augenspiegel* is primarily a vindication of himself from Pfefferkorn's attacks. He notes in detail his accuser's lies—he reckons thirty-four of them—and inveighs against him in language of much strength, describing him, among other things, as "a scoundrel void of honour." This vituperation, though largely excusable by the manners and customs of the age, renders the *Augenspiegel* unpleasant reading. But, apart from that, it cannot be considered an altogether satisfactory production. Unquestionably in it Reuchlin somewhat hedges. The signal merit of the Opinion was its frank and fearless defence of the great mass of Hebrew literature. But in the *Augenspiegel* Reuchlin seeks to reduce the difference between himself and his opponents to this: that they desired to destroy Hebrew books unconditionally, while he would destroy only such of them as were tainted with heretical sentiment. In the Opinion he specifies two treatises as worthy of conflagration, the *Nizachon* and the *Toldoth Jeschu*. But in the *Augenspiegel* he speaks of noxious portions of the *Talmud*, for which, in the former document, he had pleaded in its integrity, and advocates, not the retention of that volume by the Jews, but the preservation of some copies of it in safe Christian custody. Again, in the *Augenspiegel*, he is ready to destroy indiscriminately all Jewish apologetic writings; and he

explains away certain very sensible remarks in his Opinion regarding the right of the Jews to reason in defence of their creed as mere considerations thrown out for what they might be worth, in a discussion wherein the pros and cons were stated, and as not intended to express his own mature judgment. He treats similarly what he had said in his Opinion about the Jews' ignorance of Christ's divinity, and professes his firm faith that such ignorance is culpable, and will damn them to all eternity. "Hoc teneo firmiter et credo quod eorum ignorantia sit culpabilis, et eam illos minime excusare a culpa mortali, verum cum ea æternaliter damnabuntur."

It cannot be said, then, that in the *Augenspiegel* Reuchlin attains the Horatian ideal of the "justum et tenacem propositi virum." But his course, if not very heroic, is very intelligible. A man no longer young, and eager to devote to the peaceful pursuits of scholarship all the time he could spare from grave official duties, he had no sort of desire to be drawn into theological controversy. He doubtless looked upon his explanations and concessions as so many bones thrown to the watch dogs of orthodoxy, and hoped thereby to stop their barking. The hope was not realised. The Dominicans had taken Pfefferkorn, more or less openly, under their protection. To them had been entrusted, by Papal authority, the censorship of books throughout Germany. And Reuchlin's book

was suspect to them. They dominated the University of Cologne. And the theological faculty of that seat of learning betook itself to the examination of the *Augenspiegel.* Reuchlin did all that he could—perhaps more than he should—to avert the storm which he saw gathering around him. Thus, in letters addressed to two prominent Colognese divines, Arnold von Tungern and Conrad Collin, he professed that he was no theologian, asserted his entire adherence to the teaching of the Church in all matters, and reminded them of his long and approved service to the Dominican Order as their proctor. But the theological faculty was determined not to lose the opportunity of magnifying its office. In the event, the divines required of Reuchlin to recall as far as possible all copies of his *Augenspiegel* which had gone forth, and to publish a retractation of certain positions which he was alleged to have taken, and a declaration of hostility to the Jews and the *Talmud.*

This was on the 29th of February, 1512. It was more than he could stand; and on the 23rd of March he published in German a vindicatory pamphlet entitled, *Ain clare Verstentnus in tütsch.* A volume written by Tungern, and embellished with verses by Ortuin Gratian, soon appeared in reply. Reuchlin's patience was exhausted. He resolved, as he wrote to a friend, to withstand his enemies and to continue his vindication of himself. A new pamphlet by Pfefferkorn entitled *Brandspiegel*

(Fireglass), in which he was virulently abused, further incensed him. And in 1513 he published his *Defence against Colognese Calumniators*, dedicating the work to the Emperor Maximilian. In it he repels, with much bitterness, their attacks upon him, speaks disparagingly of their theological attainments, and relieves his feelings by copious and unmeasured personal invectives against them. Most of Reuchlin's friends and supporters deprecated, or rather blamed, this loss of temper. The judicious Pirkheimer judged that he had followed his passions rather than his reason; and Erasmus, while sympathising with him, tells him roundly that the licence of vituperation which he had permitted himself would be unbecoming in any one, and was especially indecorous in so learned a man. On the other hand, Sir Thomas More, who, to be sure, could himself indulge in strong language upon occasion, inclined to vindicate the tone adopted by Reuchlin. This great scholar, so grossly outraged —"in tantum lacessitus injuria"—had indeed expressed himself freely, More says, but not less freely than truly—"libere, nec magis libere tamen quam vere." The Colognese procured from the Emperor a mandate prohibitory of the sale of the *Defence*, as likely to cause trouble among the people. They then proceeded, in due course, formally to condemn the *Augenspiegel*. They also procured its condemnation by the Universities of Lovaine, Maintz, Erfurt, and Paris.

Meanwhile, Jacob von Hochstraten, who, as Dean of the Theological Faculty of Cologne, had been the leading spirit in its censure of Reuchlin, took action against him as Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity, and cited him to appear at Maintz on the 13th of September, 1513. Reuchlin appeared by a proctor, who, finding that Hochstraten was acting both as prosecutor and judge, demurred to the proceedings. Hochstraten then offered to delegate his judicial office to some of his colleagues. To this Reuchlin objected as illegal, and appealed to the Holy See. Hochstraten was unwilling to allow the appeal. But the Archbishop of Maintz upheld it, and prohibited him from burning the *Augenspiegel*. The volume was destined, however, to provide a theological holocaust. On the 10th of February, 1514, it was committed to the flames by the divines of Cologne with the approbation of the Archbishop of that see.

In 1513 Reuchlin resigned all his offices. Like Milton, he had hoped to dedicate the evening of his life to beholding "the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies." But for him, as for Milton, it was otherwise ordered. In his declining years he found himself embarked upon "a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes." And the duty which lay before him was to quit him like a man in that uncongenial element. The controversy in which he

was engaged had been forced upon him by the theologians. He had no alternative, as an honest man, but to accept the combat, and to become a hero in spite of himself. The next eight years of his life were a protracted duel between him and Hochstraten. That Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity, it must be admitted, does not seem to have been an over-scrupulous combatant. Perhaps a religious disputant seldom is. The *odium theologicum* deadens the moral sense. But there is no sort of reason for doubting Hochstraten's assertion in his *Apologia Secunda*, that he and his confederates simply sought the defence of Christian truth, as they conceived of it. They were upholding the traditions of medieval Christianity, the only Christianity of which they had knowledge. "Stare super antiquas vias" was their rule. For their anti-Semitic fervour in general, and for their hatred of the *Talmud* in particular, they could allege the prescription of centuries. They were fighting the battle of the Old against the New. And the dull conservatism of the clergy, and especially of the decadent monastic orders, was enlisted on their side. Around Reuchlin, on the other hand, were gathered the sympathies of the leading Humanists not only throughout Germany—there they had long looked up to him as their leader and head *—but throughout Europe:

* Geiger well observes: "Seit den fast 40 Jahren dass Reuchlin wirkte waren die Gelehrten gewohnt ihn als Führen

of such men as Erasmus and Buddæus, of More and Fisher, of Cardinals Grimani and Ægidius di Virtebo. Capnionphili they delighted to call themselves. Consciously or unconsciously, they all knew that principles far transcending the immediate issue were at stake. When Deutsch wrote "the *Talmud* was the palladium" of Reuchlin and his friends, he was certainly indulging in a poetic fancy. Reuchlin did not know much, or care much, about the *Talmud*. Erasmus, and the great mass of the Humanists, knew and cared nothing. What seemed to cultivated men so monstrous was that the whole power and influence of theologians should be used against such a man in such a cause. Even Erasmus, who so seldom lost his philosophic calm, breaks into bitter invectives against Pfefferkorn in his letters. "From a mad Jew he has became a madder Christian," we read in one of them. In another, "He could render his former religionists no greater service than thus to betray Christianity, under the hypocritical pretence of serving it." In a third the desire is expressed that secular authority—the power of the Emperor or of the magistrates of Cologne—should be employed against such a public pest.

zu betrachten: jetz seit er angegriffen war, wurde er inmer mehr der Leiter um den man sich schaarte, das Haupt in dessen Vehrerung man eins war, nach dem man sich nannte" (p. 324).

Leo X. had just been elected to the Apostolic Throne when Reuchlin's appeal reached Rome. It is a curious irony of fate that from first to last the Pontificate of this most untheological of Popes should have been filled with theological strife. Into the merits of Reuchlin's case he does not seem—at all events, at this time—to have personally inquired. He referred the appeal—why, is not known—to the Bishops of Speyer and Worms, or to one of them. The Bishop of Worms did not act. The Bishop of Speyer, a young and recently appointed prelate, feeling himself insufficient for such a matter, committed the inquiry regarding it to George Truchsess, the Dean of his Cathedral, who chanced to be a friend of Reuchlin, and to George von Schwalbach, a distinguished jurist. The decision of the Bishop, founded upon the report of his delegates, was given on the 29th of March, 1514. It was that Hochstraten had exceeded his powers; that the *Augenspiegel* contained no heresy; that both parties should henceforth keep silence; and that Hochstraten should pay the costs. Hochstraten appealed to the Pope, and went in person to Rome to conduct his case. Reuchlin was represented by an advocate, obtained for him by Questemberg, not without difficulty, owing to fear of Dominican influence and authority. Learned men from all quarters wrote to Reuchlin expressing their sympathy with him. And towards the end of 1514 he published a

collection of these letters under the title of *Clarorum Virorum epistolæ ad Joh. Reuchlin.* Many of his supporters also wrote to Rome to advocate his cause. Among them was the Emperor Maximilian. He had never been a patron of Reuchlin. With regard to the question of the Jewish books, as to many other matters, he followed the last counsellor who caught his ear. But the reputation and welfare of the greatest of those scholars whom he prized as the glory of Germany, he had much at heart. And his letter to the Pope was extremely favourable to Reuchlin. On the other hand, the young King of Spain, Charles, who was to be Maximilian's successor in the Imperial dignity, wrote to the Pontiff on behalf of Hochstraten; and the Dominican Order freely exerted their vast influence in support of his cause. Solicitation seems at that time to have played a large part in judicial proceedings at Rome. At last a commission of twenty-two members was appointed to investigate the matter. And on the 2nd of July, 1516, it agreed—with the significant exception of Sylvester Prierias, the Master of the Sacred Palace—upon a report exonerating the *Augenspiegel* and condemning the Opinions of the several Universities which had pronounced against it. Reuchlin's friends now confidently expected a decision of the Pope in his favour. Instead of that there appeared—doubtless through the influence of Sylvester Prierias—a Papal man-

date *De Supersedendo*, the practical effect of which was to hang up the cause indefinitely.

Neither side was satisfied. And the matter continued to be vehemently debated before the tribunal of that educated public opinion which had now begun to grow up in Germany. At the end of the year 1515, the first collection of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* appeared. In August, 1516, followed additions. In the beginning of 1517 the greater part of Book II. was published. In the spring of that year further letters were given to the world. These epistles were the work of a young school of Humanists, of whom the chief was Ulrich von Hutten, in some respects the most brilliant personality of that age in Germany. A bright, impetuous soul, not very learned, not very pious, not very scrupulous, was Hutten: a knight and warrior rather than a student and scholar, but able to cut with the pen as with a sharp sword: a born rebel who, in in that time of strife and revolt, found himself in a congenial element. His chief associate in the production of the *Letters of the Obscure Men* was his friend John Jäger of Dornheim, who preferred the designation of Crotus Rubianus. Some were written by Hermann vom Busche, better known as Hermannus Buschius. Erasmus expressly says the authors were three in number. It is not improbable, however, that Herman, Count of Nuenaar, Petrejus Aperbach, and Eoban

Hesse may have had some hand in them.* These *Letters* were a curious token of the march of events. They could not possibly have been produced twenty years before. The grave, dignified, and religious pens of the older German Humanists could never have indited them. They are, indeed, singularly, though unostentatiously, political in their tone: an indication of that anti-Roman feeling which was rapidly developing throughout Germany. Unquestionably they are among the most pungent satires ever written. Their sting lay in their verisimilitude. Indeed, the persons ridiculed took them quite seriously at first, and supposed them to be composed in defence of decadent scholasticism and monkery. Of course they are not wholly fair—what satire is? The ridicule with which they overwhelm the enemies of Reuchlin, from the great Ortuin himself, glory of the University of Cologne, to the humble Magister Conradus de Zuiccaria or Frater Conradus Dollenkopfius, is merciless: just as merciless as the ridicule with which Pope overwhelmed the dunces of his age. But, however grave the ethical reservations which we may feel ourselves obliged to make with regard to them, it is impossible not

* On this subject see a very learned and able article in the *Edinburgh Review* of March, 1831. There are in it a few inaccuracies, but it is quite the best discussion of the subject with which I am acquainted, and I agree generally, with its conclusions.

to be amused with their cleverness, or to doubt their effectiveness against the ignorance and fanaticism of the times. Geiger, indeed, thinks that their actual effect is usually overrated. Public opinion, he says, had long decided in favour of Reuchlin, and the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* were rather a trophy of victory than a new weapon. For myself, however, I agree with Bishop Creighton that the book did much to popularise the conception of a stupid party opposed to the cause of progress. Indeed, is it possible to imagine anything more stupid than the picture—self-delineated as was supposed—of the rank and file of German clerics, doltish, swinish *and* devout? animals, with a disfiguring touch of religion, manifested chiefly in crass credulity and fierce fanaticism.

"From all places, great and small," observes Geiger, "the monks write to Ortuin Gratian, the head of the Colognese. He is their master, and Pfefferkorn is his prophet. They know nothing about Reuchlin. They have not read his *Augenspiegel*. But they are sure he is a heretic, and ought to be banned as such. They feel themselves so blissful in their ignorance. The intellect (*Geist*) that they have never exercised, and never want to exercise, lets itself so willingly be confined in the fetters of the scholastic method. The most barbarous and comic Latin-German conceivable sounds so melodious to them. And, behold, there come the new Humanists (*Poeten*) and make a mock at their ancient master, laugh at the antiquated ways, and bring a whole treasure (*Schatz*) of new poets forward, whom they vaunt as alone authentic (*gültige*) and worthy of imitation. Mere external piety pleases them so well. They gorge and guzzle, and follow, undisturbed, their fleshly desires: they say Mass and get absolution from their transgressions.

And now come earnest worthy men who are not content with this formal religion, who, in the place of exterior practices of piety, set up true interior holiness."

Yes; savage as the satire is, there can be no doubt of its substantial truth. The German clergy, unlike the Italian, were little touched by the Humanistic movement. The vast majority of them despised the new learning, and the literary culture of which it was the instrument. They preferred the medieval "mumpsimus" to the Renaissance "sumpsimus": their "private darkness" to the general light. "It is heresy with them," writes Erasmus, "to speak Latin correctly: it is heresy to know Greek: anything they cannot understand, anything they cannot do, is heresy."* But Erasmus, although he laughed heartily at the *Letters of the Obscure Men*—so heartily, it is said, as to have ruptured a tumour which threatened his life—disapproved of a book so alien from his own temper of candour and moderation. Leo X., who "had a pleasant wit and loved a timely joke," doubtless laughed no less heartily at it. But he found himself bound to reprobate it, officially. On the 15th of March, 1517, a Papal Bull solemnly condemned the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* as "the work of certain sons of iniquity, having no fear of God or man before their eyes, and impelled by wicked, damnable, and temerarious loquacity." The reading of it was prohibited to the faithful,

* Ep. CCCCLXXVII.

and its destruction by fire was commanded. But the authors of the *Letters* troubled themselves little about the Pontifical censure. Nay, it served them chiefly as an advertisement and incited them to fresh compositions.

The *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* called forth a number of replies, upon which it is not necessary for me to dwell. I must, however, note that in 1517 Reuchlin published his treatise *De Arte Cabbalistica*. It is the complement of his book, *De Verbo Mirifico*, given to the world a quarter of a century before. I shall speak of them both presently. Hochstraten, ever on the watch for heresy, scented in the book unorthodox tendencies, and attacked it in his *Destructio Cabbalæ*, which he dedicated to Leo X. Reuchlin did not reply. It was unnecessary that he should do so. The general verdict of enlightened men, not only in Germany but throughout Europe, had long been given in his favour. Erasmus sums the matter up in a letter to him dated the 8th of November, 1520: "Thy memory, thy fame, are too deeply impressed upon the hearts of the good for the slander of thy adversaries to root them thence. Truth is unconquerable. It will exalt thy name to posterity, even as it makes thee great in the present." More than a year before, Erasmus had gone out of his way to address to Hochstraten a letter, recommending to him the meekness and gentleness which become a Christian, and es-

pecially a theologian. Perhaps nothing more full of the "mitis sapientia," which was a distinguishing characteristic of the great Humanist, ever proceeded from his heart and from his pen. It is a noble letter. But it was written in vain. Luther's revolt had now further complicated affairs. And the authorities in Rome had fallen back upon the old policy of repression. Reuchlin, indeed, held himself entirely aloof from the Lutheran party. Their methods were uncongenial to him. Their theological innovations he abhorred. But they saw their opportunity to make use of him. And they availed themselves of it. Luther, in a letter which obtained—as doubtless he had intended—great publicity, proclaimed himself Reuchlin's follower. And there can be no question that the Reuchlin controversy did, in a sense, serve the cause of the Lutheran revolt by setting popular sympathies against the clergy.

Reuchlin's friends looked with anxiety at the situation. And an attempt, which is a very curious sign of the times, was made to end the matter by a *coup de main*. A friend of Ulrich von Hutten, Franz von Sickingen—not a learned man, but full of a chivalrous devotion to learning—determined to bring to Reuchlin's aid the power of the sword. On the 26th of July, 1519, he addressed a formal notification ("Erforderung und Verkündung") to the Provincial, Priors and con-

vents of the Dominican Order in Germany, and especially to Brother Jacob von Hochstraten, demanding that from that time forth they should leave Dr. Reuchlin in peace, accept the Speyer judgment, and pay all the costs of the process: and requiring compliance with this regulation within two months, in default whereof he and his friends would enforce it. The Dominicans were well aware that Franz von Sickingen was a man of his word, and not to be trifled with. They were at their wits' end, and made overtures to Reuchlin, who would have nothing to say to them. They gained, however, an extension of time from Sickingen; and on the 6th of May, 1520, at a general Chapter of the Order, held at Frankfort-on-the-Main, his demands were formally acceded to, and a letter was despatched by the Provincial to Rome, announcing this to the Holy See. But before that document arrived, Hochstraten had procured a definitive decision against Reuchlin. Leo X. had committed himself to a reactionary policy. That was the immediate effect at the Papal Court of Luther's revolt. Cardinal Cajetan, the General of the Dominicans, and the Master of the Sacred Palace, Sylvester Prierias, a member of that Order, had the ear of Leo. The Pope, no doubt, was heartily sick of the whole uncongenial business, and glad to end it in one way or another. On the 23rd of June, 1520, the papal sentence was promulgated. It set aside the

judgment of the Bishop of Speyer as untenable; pronounced the *Augenspiegel* "a dangerous book, offensive to pious ears, and too favourable to the Jews"; enjoined silence on Reuchlin, and condemned him in costs. It is worthy of note that at the very time when this pontifical decision was being prepared, Leo X., in his character of patron of learning, was promoting the printing of the *Talmud*, which was published for the first time in that year, 1520, at Venice.

IV.

The immediate effect of the Papal judgment was not great. The Dominicans seemed half ashamed of their victory. Hochstraten exhibited unwonted modesty, and published no jubilatory pamphlet. Pfefferkorn was the only one, as Geiger expresses it, to beat the drum ecclesiastic —if I may so translate "die Lärmtrommel zu schlagen"—upon the occasion. Hutten says that Reuchlin appealed. But to whom? From the Pope badly informed to the Pope better informed? Or from the Pope to a future General Council? Nothing is known of any such appeal. Nor was Reuchlin the man to make it. The Supreme Judge of Christendom had decided against him and the pious and law-abiding man bowed his head to the sentence of duly-constituted authority,

though he believed it wrong. The Dominicans were content with their barren triumph, and did not follow up their victory. Reuchlin remained unmolested till his death. The general interest in his controversy had largely abated, indeed, long before its termination, in the excitement of the more momentous issues raised by Luther.

Reuchlin's defeat did not cause him to waver in his religious convictions, or in his loyalty to the Holy See. It is pretty evident, however, from expressions in his letters, that he felt it bitterly. But, at all events, he was now quit of the dispute. And the two years of life which remained to him were passed in unremitting devotion to his favourite studies. The expenses of the long ecclesiastical litigation had been heavy. They had enforced him in 1518 to sell a portion of his estate at Stuttgart—"agellos meos ad xxviii. jugera coactus sum vendere," we read in a letter of his written in that year. One of the Obscure Men is made to say, "I believe that he is reduced to beggary *(depaupertatus)* by reason of his great law costs, and I am heartily glad of it." But he was not exactly "depaupertatus." A modest competency remained to him. And his habits were frugal, his tastes were simple, his friends—notably the excellent Pirkheimer—were generous. He was still able to indulge in his one luxury—books. But the troubles which arose at Stuttgart through the misrule of Duke Ulrich rendered his

residence there perilous. In 1519 he left that city, and betook himself to Ingolstadt, where he found refuge in the home of John Eck, a learned man and a loyal friend, who afterwards achieved fame as the champion of orthodoxy against Luther. There, on the 29th of February, 1520, he was nominated by Duke William of Bavaria, Professor of Greek and Hebrew, with a stipend of two hundred gold gulden, a magnificent provision for an Academic Chair in those times. Forty years had elapsed since he had publicly taught in a University.* And now, at the age of sixty-five, he was called upon once more to mount the professional rostrum. His lectures were thronged. Students from all quarters flocked to them. His "prosperous labour" refreshed and invigorated him. It was to him as a second spring or a St. Martin's summer, "in that pure air, by the healthful Danube stream," he says in one of his letters. But in April, 1521, the plague drove him from Ingolstadt. He returned to Stuttgart purposing, apparently, there to spend the remainder of his days in peace—"ubi jam tibi quiescere licet," his friend Hummelberg writes.

That, however, was not to be. The University of Tübingen wanted a Professor of Hebrew, and Reuchlin was induced to accept the office. He lectured daily on that language and on Greek,

* Namely, at Poitiers. At Tübingen and Heidelberg his instruction was privately given.

alternately, throughout the winter of 1521–1522. His pupils were numerous, and a great career of Academic usefulness seemed still open to him. In one of his last extant letters—it is dated the 24th of February, 1522—he speaks in noble and touching words of his future labours. They are indeed in the foundations, he says: "but truth shall arise out of the earth for those that come after: light shall put to flight the darkness—the light which for forty long years has been obscured by sophisms: and he, old as he is, will, through the Divine assistance, have some part in this."* The spirit, truly, was willing, but the flesh was weak. And in the early summer of 1522 he betook himself to the Baths of Liebenzell, near Hirschau, in search of health. He found, instead, death. He was struck down by jaundice, and on the 30th of June he passed away from the strife of tongues "to where, beyond these voices, there is peace." A week before his departure the "poet" Ursinus Velius visited him, bringing an eagerly welcomed letter from Erasmus, the last token of amity that reached him in this world from his fellow-worker in the cause of light. Death did not dissolve their bond. The *Colloquy*

* It is worth while to quote his own words: "Jaciemus singuli fundamenta novæ posteritati. Veritas de terra orietur et exactis tenebris lux clarescet quam obfuscavit jam annos quadragintos sophismatum pernicies. Vigilabo etiam senex. Deus in adjutorium meum intende." (Horawitz, p. 74.)

on the Apotheosis of Reuchlin is no unworthy memorial of it, reared by the friend who was left :

> " the divided half of such
> A friendship as had master'd Time."

V.

And now, how are we to account of Reuchlin's life work? In answering that question let us remember that we must contemplate the man and his labours in his environment. To his own age his erudition seemed something portentous.

> " Reuchlin, wer will sich ihm vergleichen ?
> Zu seiner Zeit ein Wunderzeichen,"

says Goethe. But indeed he may well be a " Wunderzeichen " to our age as to his own. Things which the progress of scholarship has made extremely facile to us were extremely arduous to him. It is not so much the breadth or the solidity of his learning—most broad and solid it was—but the fact that he attained it with such scanty appliances, and in spite of such colossal difficulties, that reveals the man's intellectual power. He was a pioneer; the pioneer of a new method. In him we may salute the first of the *savants* of the modern world; yes, and, in some sense, the father of them. Therein, and not in the permanent value of his work, is his true title

to a place among the world's intellectual leaders. He has left us no "great legacies of thought"; he has left us no vast structure of science; he has left us no masterpieces of literary form. Probably no human being would now read one line of his writings save under the compulsion of a sense of duty. They are of the things "which have their day and cease to be." They are stepping-stones on which the world has risen to higher things. They are of account to us merely as documents of history.

The work on which Reuchlin specially valued himself, and for which many of the best of his contemporaries—conspicuous among them the saintly Fisher—specially valued him, must needs seem to us, intrinsically, of no value whatever. Like Raymond Lully before him, like Pico della Mirandola and Cornelius Agrippa in his own time, like Van Helmont and Fludd and Henry More, who came after him, Reuchlin was greatly fascinated by the *Cabbalah*. There was in his mind a strong strain of mysticism; and, perhaps, he took seriously the marvellous claims which are made for that secret lore. It is asserted to have been taught by God Himself to angels in Paradise; to have been imparted to Adam as the means of regaining the high estate lost by "man's first disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree"; to have been transmitted to Noah and Abraham and the Seventy Elders, from whom it passed

to David and Solomon, and in latter days, after the fall of Jerusalem, to Rabbi Simon ben Jochai. This master is supposed to be he who, assisted by visions and revelations of the prophet Elias, first committed it to writings, of which the volume called *Zohar* is the great repository. A much higher antiquity, however, is claimed for the book *Jetzirah*—* although the most distinctive doctrines of the Cabbalah are not found therein—its authorship being attributed to Abraham. "Round these mystical treatises cluster all the productions of the school which gradually came into existence in the course of time."

The great themes discussed in the *Cabbalah* are the nature of Deity, Cosmogony, the creation of angels and of men, the final end and destiny of the universe, and the esoteric meaning of the Mosaic law—"the wondrous things" for the seeing of which the Psalmist prayed that his eyes might be opened. It is, in fact, a system of pantheistic philosophy, largely the outcome, there can be little doubt, of Persian influences. It has much in common with Sûfism, although it is far less fascinating than that sweetest and saddest expression of poetical mysticism. The doctrine of emanation plays a great part in it. So does the doctrine of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls. In the

* A very full account of both these works will be found in Franck's learned treatise: *La Kabbale, ou La Philosophie Religieuse des Hébreux.*

solution which it offers of the insoluble mysteries of existence, and sin, and suffering, matter is conceived of as a lower form of mind, evil as a lower form of good: the death of the righteous as "a kiss of love" by which the All Holy unites for for ever to Himself souls purified by the discipline of existences apart from Him; and those pure souls are regarded as a true sacrifice, yes, as an expiation: the sacrifice and expiation of the universe.

So much as to the doctrines of the Cabbalists. Nothing more fantastic is well conceivable than the exegetical method generally adopted by them, although we but rarely meet with it in the *Zohar*. They attribute to the Hebrew Sacred Books a fourfold sense. And this sense they disclose to the initiated by the application of definite hermeneutical rules, which chiefly concern the letters whereof the words are composed. Every letter is reduced to its numerical value: every letter is taken as initial or abbreviative of a word: the initial and final letters of several words are respectively formed into separate words: two words occurring in the same verse are joined together and made into one: the words of those verses which are regarded as containing a peculiarly recondite meaning are ranged in squares in such a manner as to be read either vertically or boustrophedonally, beginning at the right or left hand; the words of several verses are placed over each other, and the

letters which stand under each other are formed into new words; lastly, the letters of words are changed by way of anagram and new words are obtained.* All this complicated and ingenious trifling is conducted according to fixed rules devised and elaborated, with an infinity of trouble, by extremely subtle and ingenious minds. "Quantum in rebus inane!" is the reflection which naturally occurs to us. It did not occur to Reuchlin, who took the Cabbalistic method most seriously. In fact, the extraordinary proceedings of the mystical interpreters of the Christian scriptures for fifteen centuries may well have prepared him for it. For the rest, we should observe that he found a certain analogy between some of the teachings of the Cabbalists and the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement, and supposed himself to be serving the Christian faith by pointing that out. The analogy is quite superficial. It was but lost labour that he rose up early, and late took rest, and ate the bread of carefulness, in order to spin this cobweb.

"Vain wisdom all and false philosophy," we must say, then, of this work of Reuchlin. Hochstraten was well warranted when he spoke of "Reuchlinicæ Cabalæ deliramenta." His admiring contemporaries were much in error in supposing that his real achievement lay there. As much in error

* See Ginsburg, *The Kabbalah*, pp. 49–54, where examples of all this may be found by those who desire to see them.

were those Lutheran sectaries who, long after he had passed away, asserted as his chief title to fame that he was "the Father of the German Reformation." A more grotesquely incorrect designation it would be hard to invent for him. No doubt his long battle with Pfefferkorn and Hochstraten, in which he appealed to the public through writings in the vernacular tongue, subserved, indirectly, Luther's revolt against ecclesiastical authority. But we must remember that Reuchlin's object, during the whole of the contest, was not to undermine that authority, but to vindicate in its eyes his own orthodoxy. How far removed he was from approving of Luther's breach with the Church * is sufficiently evident from the fact that his great-nephew, Melanchthon, by participating in it, lost the old man's favour, and the bequest of his library; a collection such as probably no other private person in Germany then possessed. But, indeed, it is abundantly manifest from the whole tenour of Reuchlin's life, and from many places in his correspondence, that, in Bishop Creighton's well-weighed words, "he had no doubts about

* If any doubt could have existed on this matter it would be fully dispelled by a letter of Ulrich von Hutten to Reuchlin, dated February 22, 1521, in which he is bitterly reproached for repudiating Luther. The letter is No. ccxcix. in Geiger's *Briefwechsel*. It was given to the world for the first time by Böcking, in the second half of the second supplementary volume of Hutten's works, and was reproduced by Geiger in an appendix to his *Life of Reuchlin*.

the doctrines of the Church." Theology, her theology, was in his estimation higher than any other science. "We cannot call him," writes Geiger, "a precursor of the Reformation: he stood upon the standpoint of the ancient Church." "He was a servant of the Church, he was her subject. Highly as he prized scientific inquiry, and unfettered freedom in stating its results, he still submitted his particular writings, and the whole edifice of his teaching, to the judgment of the Church, and was ready to retract anything wherein he had erred."

Such is the truth about Reuchlin. And yet it is also true that he was the pioneer of the modern scientific method in philology necessarily destined to collide with the unscientific medieval method, and to make an end of it, and of such religious conceptions as were based upon it. The great difference, indeed, which marks him off from the earlier German Humanists—from Rudolph von Langen, Rudolph Agricola and John Wessel, for example—is that while they were first and before all things theologians, he was first and before all things a philologist. They either devoted all their life to the study of theology, or they ended their life in its study. He, though a deeply religious man, was, as he told Tungern and Collin, no theologian. He was devoted to learning for the sake of learning, though he endeavoured to make it subserve the cause of the Christian faith. There

is a memorable saying of his in the *Rudimenta Hebraica*, which indicates how deeply he was penetrated by the scientific spirit. "I reverence St. Jerome as an angel, I prize Nicholas de Lyra as a great teacher, but Truth I adore as God." It is not easy to overrate the importance which attaches to his Hebrew studies as the beginning of the higher Biblical criticism. We may, indeed, say that in his *Rudimenta Hebraica* the voice of scientific exegesis speaks for the first time. Speaks, or rather lisps, for the accents are infantine. The verse quoted in the Preface to his first book, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child," indicates truly the character of his scientific work.

Of course, in common with most of his learned contemporaries—Erasmus is a notable exception—Reuchlin possessed a most exaggerated conception of the importance of the Hebrew tongue. Like St. Jerome, and perhaps all the Fathers of the Church, he regarded it as the very source and fount of human speech. No dream, we may be quite sure, ever crossed his mind of that science of languages which relegates Hebrew to its proper place as one of the Semitic forms. Still, of the science of languages we may, in some sort, regard him as the founder. For this science is the outcome of that "sense and tact of criticism," to use Geiger's happy phrase, which Reuchlin possessed in ampler measure than any of his contemporaries.

It is not easy for us to estimate his boldness in denying the absolute authority of the Vulgate, in pointing out its errors, in suggesting its emendation. Here, too, Erasmus was a fellow-worker with him. Both insisted upon returning to the original sources. But Reuchlin vindicated, much more effectively than Erasmus, the independence of the scientific method. He treats the text of the Hebrew Sacred Books like any other ancient text, and seeks to ascertain its meaning in entire disregard of traditional glosses. "I am not discussing the sense of this passage as a theologian, but the words as a grammarian," he writes in one place. The sentence may well be regarded as the starting-point of the higher criticism.

But it may be said that in his *De Verbo Mirifico* and his *De Arte Cabbalistica*, Reuchlin makes no proof of the scientific faculty. That is true. Laboured and learned as those treatises are, they are absolutely unscientific; just as unscientific as the Apocalyptic aberrations of Sir Isaac Newton, or his exposition of Daniel's dream of the four beasts. They are confused and dreary visions of the night before the day-star of criticism had arisen. They are to criticism what astrology is to astronomy. Still, here too Reuchlin is the pioneer of the modern mind. He did the great service of directing the thoughts of men to that study of Eastern languages and religions which it has been reserved for our own age adequately to pursue.

Herder has finely said: "Reuchlin spoke to Oriental literature the word of power: 'Arise and come hither, thou dead man.' And the dead man arose, and came forth as he was, swathed with Rabbinical grave clothes, and his head wrapped about with the napkin of the *Cabbalah*. Incomparably easier was, and is, that second word: 'Loose him and let him go.'" * Reuchlin laboured, as we all do, in his day, and, primarily, for his day. Primarily; but ultimately for the generations that should come after. And we have entered into his labours. Ours is the far-off fruit of his unwearied diligence, his tried veracity, his simple faith, his invincible fortitude—fruit indeed of which he never dreamed: "non sua poma." He never imagined that the Oriental studies, to which the best years of his life were devoted, would unlock the treasures of languages far older and richer than the Hebrew, and reveal the secrets of religions anterior to the beliefs of Israel and, in some sense, the source of them. Doubtless, he would have been distressed and dismayed if a vision had visited him of the achievements of the scientific method, whether in Biblical exegesis or in the comparative analysis of the world's creeds.

"Prudens futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocte permit Deus."

* See his paper on Reuchlin in his "Galerie grosser und weiser Männer." *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. xv. p. 87 (ed. 1829).

The intellectual freedom of our race would never have been wrought out if the men who have been its chief instruments had foreseen "the long result of time." For they would have judged it by the standards of their own age, and would have ceased from their work in fear and trembling. No; consequences are divinely hidden from us. "Quod adest memento componere æquus" is a precept binding upon us in a different and a deeper sense than that which the words bore for the poet. It is—

> "Enough if something from our hands have power
> To live, and work, and serve the future hour."

Enough if we are permitted in any sense, in any measure, to labour for the truth which makes us free. Honestly to seek the truth, boldly to speak the truth, patiently to suffer, if need be, for the truth's sake, is the law of scientific inquiry. That was the law of Reuchlin's life. It was in loyal obedience to it that he fought his good fight against the rulers of the darkness of this world. And the victory which he won—in apparent defeat—was a victory for us and for all time; a conquest, never to be undone, of light for liberty.

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CHAPTER V.

LUTHER—THE REVOLUTIONIST.

I.

Before I enter upon the subject of this chapter, I may observe that not one of the least of the difficulties in writing it is presented by the abundance of the material which must be reckoned with. The Lutheran celebration in 1883 was the occasion of what may be called a deluge of Lutheran literature, much of it worth little, but little of it, perhaps, wholly worthless. To enter even upon the most cursory criticism of even the more considerable portion of it, would be impossible here. I must content myself with saying that I have done my best to make it subserve the present purpose. Concerning the standard writers on Luther, the fewest words may suffice. Köstlin's *Life* * is a mine of valuable information; but he is dull in style, partisan in tone, and displeases by his

* *Martin Luther, sein Leben und seine Schriften*, von Dr. Julius Köstlin.

pietistic twang. Kolde's volumes * are excellent reading; and although he does not dissemble his personal opinions—as indeed why should he?—he writes much more like a man of the world than do most German Professors. The portion of Janssen's vast undertaking † dealing with Luther displays immense erudition; but it also displays too much of the spirit of the advocate, too little of the spirit of the judge. Among English writers on Luther, the first place must be given to Dr. Beard. It is an irreparable loss that he lived to execute no more than the first volume of what would certainly have been a monumental work. ‡ Of Dr. Mozley's Essay, § it is enough to say that nothing more scholarly and more brilliant ever came from his gifted pen. The chapters in Bishop Creighton's admirable *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, devoted to Luther, make full proof of the wide learning, the entire candour, the statesman's mind, which were the characteristic excellences of that lamented prelate, lost, indeed, to history some years before his loss to the Church of England, and to his friends. In this age the mitre appears to be as fatal to literature as the grave.

* *Martin Luther eine Biographie*, von T. Theodor Kolde.

† *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*, von Johannes Janssen.

‡ *Martin Luther and the Reformation in Germany until the close of the Diet of Worms*, by the late Charles Beard.

§ Republished in his *Essays Historical and Theological*.

II.

There is hardly any event in Luther's life which has not been obscured by theological fanaticism—Catholic or Protestant. Even his parents are portrayed in very different colours, according as sympathetic or hostile religionists have delineated them. On the one hand, we are told that his father was homicidal and his mother unchaste; on the other, both his parents are described as honest and God-fearing. What is certain is that he came from a race of peasants at Möhra, where his name is still borne by three families, among whose members a strong resemblance to his lineaments may be traced: a sturdy, independent race they were and are, specially noted for a readiness to employ their fists, whether for aggression or defence. "My father," said Luther, "was a poor miner; my mother carried wood upon her back." But by steady, persevering industry and frugality, they made their way in the world, and Hans Luther became the proprietor of three furnaces at Mansfeld, and a member of the city council. They had seven children, Martin being the eldest: a family large enough to task their resources to the uttermost. Luther, in after-life, wrote feelingly of the happiness of childhood, tried neither by the anxieties of material existence, nor by the distress of spiritual conflicts, but enjoying in gladness and freedom the bounty of Heaven. Of such happiness

he could have experienced little. The children of Hans and Margaret Luther, and especially the first-born, must have shared fully in the hardships and privations of their parents. Their lives were rough and full of monotonous toil. The tone of their home was sad and severe. After the death of Hans Luther, Martin paid a touching tribute to his beneficent affection (*wohlthuende Liebe*), to the sweetness of their daily intercourse. But it is certain, from other passages in his writings, that the discipline of the house was of Spartan severity, the rod being by no means spared, but vigorously wielded, upon not unfrequent occasions, until blood flowed. Indeed, we may reasonably hold that the extreme severity of his parents did much to develop the morbid tenderness of conscience, the extreme scrupulosity, which characterized the earlier years of his monastic career. The superstitions of peasant life took firm hold upon him during his childhood—a hold which was little, if at all, relaxed in his maturer age. Thunderstorms and other commotions of nature were always regarded by him as the work of the Prince of the Power of the Air. He never doubted the efficacy of charms and incantations. He was firmly assured of the potency of witchcraft to hurt both body and soul. In this, as in so many other respects, he was—to quote his own description of himself—"a peasant and the son of a peasant" all his life long.

There is little in what we know of Martin

Luther's schoolboy days at Eisleben, Magdeburg, and Eisenach, to lead us to linger over them. It may be noted, indeed, as a trait of the times, that, like other poor children, he was obliged to eke out the insufficient means which his father could provide for his sustenance and school-fees, by singing for alms. And at Eisenach his melodious alto voice pleased the ears of Ursula Cotta, the wife of a leading merchant of the town, who often invited him to her table, and occasionally had him to stay in her house. It was his first introduction to a sphere of life higher than that in which he was born. In the brief biographical sketch which we owe to the pen of Melanchthon, we are told that while he was at school at Eisenach, "having a very vigorous intellect, especially fitted for eloquence, he rapidly surpassed his schoolfellows both in the choice of words and in fluency; and in prose and verse composition excelled the youths who were educated with him." In 1501 he was entered at Erfurt, one of the most famous of the Universities of Germany, and especially distinguished as the first place in that country where Greek was printed in its own letters—an event which took place in the year Luther went up.

Luther rapidly mastered the philosophical teachings of his instructors at Erfurt, their "thorny dialectic," as Melanchthon calls it, being not uncongenial to him, and took his Bachelor's degree in 1502, his Master's in 1505. He was, of course,

affected to some extent, by the Humanism which flourished there side by side with the old studies; but his tastes were not literary. That "vast love of the Muses," by which so many of his contemporaries, like Virgil before them, were smitten, never took great hold of him. "At the University of Erfurt," says Melanchthon, "he read most of the remains of the ancient Latin writers. These he read not like boys, merely picking out the words, but as teachers and representatives of human life. Hence he looked closely at the plans and opinions of the writers; and, having a strong accurate memory, he distinctly retained most of what he read and heard." For the rest, he appears to have been a lively, cheerful fellow (*ein hürtige, frölicher Geselle*), and his musical tastes endeared him to his friends. His father desired him to follow the profession of the law, and sent him a copy of the *Corpus Juris*, a costly book in those days. But another course in life was destined for him. On the 17th of July, 1505, he presented himself at the gate of the Augustinian convent at Erfurt, and craved admission as a postulant.

The immediate occasion of Luther's entry into religion was a violent display of electrical phenomena which overtook him at the village of Stotterheim, not far from Erfurt. "Frightened to death," writes Kolde, "by the fearful thunder and lightning, in which he seemed to hear the threatening voice of Divine anger, he fell on his knees and cried

out in mortal anguish, 'Help, dear St. Anne: I will become a monk.'" He thought it a monition from on high, like that which came to St. Paul on the road to Damascus; and he would not be disobedient to the heavenly calling. His father strongly disapproved; nay, we are told, was almost beside himself (*schier toll*) with anger. But the evangelical teaching as to forsaking father and mother supplied Martin with a sufficient answer to paternal remonstrances. Perhaps, looking at the religious conceptions of the time, we should not err if we called him a predestined monk. The extreme subjectivity of his disposition gave him a natural tendency to the cloister. To win the one thing needful by giving up the world, to purchase the pearl of great price by the sacrifice of everything else, to lose one's life—the life of self-seeking, of self-gratification, of self-will—and to find it in voluntary poverty, voluntary chastity, voluntary obedience—that was, as all men then undoubtingly believed, the highest act of a rational creature. We have no detailed account of the spiritual conflicts preceding the great renunciation which Martin Luther carried out on that bright July morning; but we know that he threw himself into the new life that he had embraced with all the ardour of his intense nature. This is his testimony of himself—and there is no ground for doubting it: "I was a monk in earnest. I lived hardly and chastely. I would not have taken one penny

without the knowledge of my superiors. I prayed without ceasing day and night." Or, as he elsewhere expresses himself, "I was a pious monk. I so strictly followed the rule of my Order that I dare to say, 'If ever any monk could have been saved through monkery, I was that monk.'"

But although we know nothing of the spiritual conflicts preceding Luther's entry into religion, we know a great deal of his interior life in the cloister. It is a study of the highest psychological interest, and gives us the key to much in his career. Of the depth and earnestness of his religious convictions there can be no doubt whatever in any mind not hopelessly warped by polemical prejudice. God and the devil were real to him with a reality hard to appreciate in these days, when, for so many, the Prince of Darkness has been sublimated into a figure of speech, and the Infinite and Eternal has become "the guess of a worm in the dark, and the shadow of its desire." "An awe of sacred things," Dr. Beard well remarks, "and a vivid perception of their tremendous reality, more than anything else, made Martin Luther what he was." And this awe and vivid perception begat an extreme scrupulousness, to which he was predisposed by natural character and by the stern experience of his childhood. For example, after he was ordained priest—that event took place in 1507—the protective ritual wherewith the Catholic Church has fenced the highest act of

her worship, the Sacrifice of the Mass, became a snare to him. He constantly tormented himself with doubts whether he might not have sinned in some minute point of the prescribed observances. Staupitz, the Vicar of his congregation—a man of much wisdom and goodness, and a master of the spiritual life—was his chief helper in these trials. "Thou art a fool; it is not God who is angry with thee, it is thou who art angry with God," he said upon one occasion. And on another, when, during a Corpus Christi procession, Luther almost fainted with religious terror as the Host was carried past, "Ah, your thoughts are not with Christ: Christ does not terrify, but console." "I should almost have died from despair," was Luther's testimony in after years, "if Staupitz had not then been with me."

How at last "day broke and the sun rose," and Luther passed out of this Valley of the Shadow of Death, he has given us no detailed account; but there is no difficulty in piecing one together from his writings. Indeed this has been done by Mozley in a few of the most striking pages of his masterly essay. "Luther," he writes, "had a mind intently self-contemplative and profoundly unquiet, which, except the strongest active occupation diverted it, preyed upon itself, scrutinised its own faith, feelings, fears, and hopes, pried into the mysteries of its own nature, and provoked internal dissatisfaction and struggles." He had "an

active, not to say fidgety, desire for a state of conscious palpable peace of mind: he was ambitious of inward satisfaction, the sensation of spiritual completeness. His devotion was based upon a direct aim at this result. He pursued it vehemently by ascetic means." * He failed. The high ideal of perfection which Christianity puts before us is not completely attainable by man. We can but approximate to it, more or less closely. "There is none good save one, that is, God." "The just falleth seven times a day." The *Lives of the Saints* show us that as a man grows in grace, and in the knowledge of the All Perfect, so does he grow in humility and in a consciousness of his own imperfection. It is the purest and noblest who, in their "all but utter whiteness," are most sensitive to the smallest stain. Here is a striking difference between the mind of the antique world, in its highest and best, and the mind that was in Christ. The philosopher of ancient Rome, in his singularly beautiful treatise *On Old Age*, proposes it as the aim of the good man to quit the world owing nothing either to gods or men. The Apostle of modern Rome, of whom his biographer tells us, "many held for certain that he had attained perfection in every virtue," and declared that "his very face breathed sanctity," protested in his last illness, "Lord, if I recover, so far as I am concerned, I shall do more evil than ever, because I

* *Essays Historical and Theological*, vol. i. p. 325.

have promised so many times to change my life and have not kept my word—so that I despair of myself." * Cicero and St. Philip Neri judged by different standards. The Saint had before him the perfect law of righteousness; and he knew well that, strive as he might, he should ever fall short of it. Luther would not acquiesce in that conclusion. Earnestly religious as he undoubtedly was, as undoubtedly he was grievously wanting in the virtue which is an essential note of the saintly character—humility. His failure to obtain perfection and peace of mind by works of righteousness, led him to fall foul of works of righteousness altogether.† And so he gradually made his way to that doctrine of justification by faith alone which is a special feature of his theology.

"Gradually," I say. It is important to realize how gradually. We have his own express testimony that he did not fully apprehend this doctrine until 1519.‡ But quite fifteen years before that

* *Vita di San Filippo Neri* scritta dal P. Pietro Giacomo Bacci, book ii. c. 9. "Era cresciuto in maggior cognizione del suo niente"—he had grown into greater knowledge of his own nothingness—is the striking comment of the pious biographer.

† He wrote in later times of this period: "Je mehr ich lief, und mich danach sehnte, zu Christus zu kommen, desto weiter entfernte er sich selbst von mir. Weder nach der Beichte, noch nach der Darbringung des Messopfers konnte ich jemals in meinem Gemüt zur Ruhe kommen, weil Gewissen aus den Werken keinen sicheren Trost gewinnen kann." (Quoted by Kolde, vol. i. p. 67.)

‡ See Beard, p. 163.

he had hit upon the notion of imputed righteousness, which is its chief foundation. If all good works are vain and valueless, how can sinful man be reconciled with a just God?—this was the question which very early presented itself to him. And the answer which ever more and more forcibly commended itself to his mind was—Merely by the imputation of the merits of Christ: an imputation, as it appeared to him, not qualified by any conditions which natural religion imposes, but absolute, and independent of the moral and spiritual state of the subject of it. This was his point of departure—though for years he was far from realizing it—from the old theology which taught that Christ came "ex injustis justos facere"; that justification, which was another name for the state of salvation, meant not merely imputed but inherent righteousness: or, in other words, that justifying grace is a "gratia gratum faciens." The principle to which Luther was tending, as Mozley accurately puts it, was "that the goodness of the person had nothing whatever to do with his being accounted good by God"; that the only thing necessary for the imputation of Christ's righteousness was what he called faith: by which he meant—to quote Mozley further—"the pure abstract faculty of confidence whereby the mind assures itself of something of which it wants to be assured." * This doctrine he

* Vol. i. p. 344. Mozley remarks: "It was a quite new principle."

came ever more and more to consider the very kernel of Christianity.

III.

I have been led to dwell thus much upon this matter, because rightly to apprehend it is absolutely necessary for understanding Luther's career. And before we go further, I must again warn my readers against the mistake, very commonly made both by his admirers and opponents, of supposing that the peculiar dogma which I have just sketched, sprang from his head fully developed and equipped, like Pallas from the head of Zeus. Luther, although a sharp disputant, was not a consecutive and logical thinker, and was for long years unconscious that he was deviating from the old theological paths, which, it must be remembered, had not then been fenced in by the Tridentine decrees. To borrow some admirable words from Dr. Beard, "It was on the anvil of controversy that Luther's doctrines were beaten out. For years his view of justification was more or less in a fluid condition. He is sure that we are justified by faith in Christ. He is sure that in the work of salvation God is everything, man nothing. But he is far from having worked out the idea of 'faith only' with the precision which it afterwards assumed with him." *

* P. 191.

How he came to work it out, we shall see by and by. Let us here resume the thread of his history. In 1508—the year after he was ordained priest—he quitted the convent to proceed to the University of Wittenberg, where the place of Professor of Philosophy had been given him by the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, upon the recommendation of Staupitz. We are told that in his professorial capacity he read lectures on Aristotle's *Dialectics* and *Physics*. But doubtless his scriptural and theological studies chiefly occupied his thoughts. In 1509 he received the appointment of Court Preacher at Wittenberg. He accepted it with reluctance—the office appeared to him so full of responsibility and danger. He soon became a power in the pulpit. His voice was fine, sonorous, clear, striking. And the matter of his discourses seems to have attracted his hearers no less than his elocution. He departed wholly from the established type of sermon, founding himself not upon the Scholastics, but upon the Bible, and especially upon the Epistles attributed to St. Paul. We know little of the details of his life during the first three years that he spent at Wittenberg. In 1512 he was sent to Rome on business of his Order—"propter monachorum controversias," Melanchthon says, with contemptuous vagueness. He stayed there four weeks. We find in his *Table Talk* a considerable number of scattered traces of the impressions

produced upon him by this expedition. And I discern no reason why we should doubt his assurances that what he saw and heard in Rome planted in him, little as he then knew it, the seeds of rebellion, which in after years were to spring up, and bear the fruit we know.* It does not appear whether he was successful in his mission. At all event he returned to Wittenberg with no loss of reputation. In 1512 he took the degree of Doctor of Divinity, against his will, in obedience to the counsels of Staupitz, the Elector Frederick paying the obligatory fees. In 1515 he became District Visitor of his Order for Meissen and Thuringen, eleven convents being under his jurisdiction. His life at this time seems to have been particularly full. In 1516 he writes: "I have need of almost two secretaries. All day long I do little but write letters. Seldom have I sufficient time to say my hours and to celebrate, to say nothing of my private temptations by the world, the flesh, and the devil."

During the years 1512 to 1517 Luther's characteristic opinions were slowly maturing. This is sufficiently proved by his Lectures on the Psalms, which, according to Melanchthon, "radiated a new light of Christian doctrine."

* So Kolde: "Es waren reiche Erfahrungen, die Luther da machte, die später für ihn von der höchsten Bedeutung werden solten . . . Damals war er noch weit entfernt allgemeinere Konsequenzen zu ziehen," vol. i. p. 79.

He began them in 1513, and was engaged upon them far into the year 1516. Kolde remarks, "The opposition between the Law and the Gospel, between sin and grace, which he had learnt from his study of the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, appears here as the very corner-stone (*Angelpunkte*) of his theological thought. He is firmly convinced that faith alone justifies. But he has no sort of presentment that in so holding, he is, in any way, opposed to the teaching of the traditional theology." * No doubt this was so. The scholastic writers from whom Luther turned aside, during these eventful years of his spiritual and intellectual development, were, after all, mere fallible men, whose systems might have their day and cease to be, like the systems of earlier teachers. He went back, as he supposed, from Aquinas to Augustine, from the Sentences to the Scriptures, with no thought of disloyalty to the Church. I should here note, that in 1516 he came upon a portion—about a fourth part—of the *Theologia Germanica* which made a deep impression upon his mind. It appeared to him entirely consonant with his own theology. In truth there is little, I might almost say nothing, of dogmatic divinity in the *Deutsche Theologie*. Its mysticism harmonizes equally well with the Lutheran view of justification, and with that subsequently laid down by the Council of Trent. But the work appealed

* *Ibid.*, p. 86.

powerfully to Luther's strongly subjective nature, and tended largely to develope his individualistic cast of thought. Notable is it also how during these years he grows in self-confidence. Strength is, indeed, from first to last, a distinguishing note of his character: the strength of convictions, which, whether right or wrong, dominated his whole being; the strength of narrow vision and and of indomitable will. But now, for the first time, he seems to realize how strong he is, and begins to display that ὕβρις, as the Greeks called it, that luxuriance of masterfulness, which often arises from such consciousness. At the period of which I am writing, he practically dominated Wittenberg. In a letter written early in 1517, he says, "Our teaching and St. Augustine's, by God's help, go on prosperously and reign in the University. Aristotle gradually descends to eternal ruin. The lectures on the Sentences are wonderfully disdained. Only teachers of the new biblical theology can hope for hearers."

Such was Luther's position at Wittenberg in 1517. "All," Dr. Beard observes, "seemed to open to him a brilliant future in the service of the Church. He held high office in his order, and might expect still higher. He enjoyed the favour of his prince. His university hung upon his words. No consciousness of discord with the Church infused uncertainty into his utterance." *

* P. 199.

All this was changed by Tetzel's preaching of the indulgence; a matter which might have seemed, which did seem, to careless observers, slight enough, but which was the immediate occasion of the greatest ecclesiastical revolution in the Christian era.

For it appears to me clear as day that Tetzel's preaching was the direct cause of Luther's revolt. There are, indeed, historians of name who judge otherwise. Thus, Janssen after devoting many pages to proving—what no well-read student can doubt—that from the first Luther was strongly attracted towards that doctrine of justification which he afterwards styled "The Gospel," proceeds to urge that it was not specially the abuses attending the preaching of Leo's pardon which brought him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities; that it was rather the doctrine itself upon which indulgences rest. This view seems to me quite untenable. The abuses Janssen, of course, does not deny, although he dismisses them with the briefest reference. It is indeed impossible even for the most thoroughgoing partisan—and that description does not fit Janssen—to deny them. They are "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." And I see no reason whatever for doubting the truth of the statement that Luther's attention was called to Tetzel's performances by penitents of his own, who advanced against his authority in the confessional, documents which

they had obtained from that pardoner. He thought it his duty to say a word of warning to his congregation. There is extant a sermon of his, preached on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 1516, containing his earliest utterances on the subject that have come down to us. In this discourse he does not call in question the theological position—I shall speak of it presently—upon which indulgences rest. But he bewails their prostitution to the greed of gain by sub-commissaries, who, instead of declaring the conditions upon which alone they avail, recommend them to the multitude as all-sufficient in themselves for eternal salvation. Then he goes on to express a number of doubts and difficulties in which the whole subject is involved, and to profess his own inability to solve them. The practical conclusion which he draws is a caution against too great confidence in these pardons, against a false security in them. It is quite clear that Luther began by denouncing the abuses of indulgences, although he ended, as we all know, by rejecting them altogether.

I suppose the conception of an indulgence popular in this country is pretty much that set forth, with inimitable irony, by Swift in his *Tale of a Tub*:—

"Whenever it happened that any rogue of Newgate was condemned to be hanged, Peter would offer him a pardon for a certain sum of money, which when the poor caitiff had made

all shifts to scrape up, and send, his lordship would return a piece of paper in this form.

"*To all mayors, sheriffs, jailors, constables, bailiffs, hangmen, &c. Whereas we are informed that A. B. remains in the hands of you, or some of you, under the sentence of death, We will and command you, upon sight hereof, to let the said prisoner depart to his own habitation, whether he stands condemned for murder, sodomy, rape, sacrilege, incest, treason, blasphemy, &c.; for which this shall be your sufficient warrant: and if you fail hereof, God damn you and yours to all eternity. And so we bid you heartily farewell.*

"*Your most humble*
man's man,
Emperor PETER.

"The wretches, trusting to this, lost their lives and money too."

Assuredly, the conception, satirised with such strange and bitter humour, must appear so monstrous to any rational creature, that controversy about it might well seem superfluous. The bare proposition that pardon of sin can be obtained by the payment of money may well take away the breath of any one who reflects what sin means, what its pardon means; who in any degree realizes the tremendous sanctions of the moral law, the infinite evil of violating it, the essential attributes of that Being of Beings whose very nature the moral law is. But the matter is not so simple as the Protestant tradition represents it. The Roman theory of indulgences—I use the adjective advisedly, for the theory, unknown to the Greek and other Oriental Churches, is of Roman origin—rests upon a foundation which, in

itself, is reasonable enough. It is based upon the august verity, the corner-stone alike of the religion of the Buddha and of the ethical philosophy of Kant, that a wrong-doer, by his wrongful deed, subjects himself to a penalty which is its natural and inevitable consequence; that the voluntary transgression of the moral law necessarily involves the punishment of the transgressor; that a debt is contracted by sin, which must be discharged. And here theologians draw a distinction. The debt, they say, of every grievous sin is twofold. There is the eternal debt, due to Divine Justice; a debt beyond the power of man to pay, which must be satisfied before the debtor can be admitted to the fruition of the Beatific Vision. And there is the temporal debt, which must be satisfied here, or in the place of penal purification hereafter. In the Sacrament of Penance, they proceed to teach, the eternal debt is remitted to the truly contrite through the merits of Him who "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." But the temporal debt still remains, and must be satisfied either by suffering in purgatorial fires, or by works of penance imposed by the confessor. It is on this doctrine of the temporal debt that the theory of indulgences has been reared. "In the Primitive Church there was a godly discipline," as the Anglican Commination Service witnesses, "that such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this

world." As the centuries went on, secret confession to the priest took the place of open confession to the assembly of the faithful, and public penance fell into disuse. And as the old ecclesiastical discipline, by which periods of penance were graduated to various offences, disappeared, the doctrine of indulgences grew up. It was closely connected with another doctrine founded on the consolatory conception of the Church as one body—the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. The superabundant merits of the Divine Redeemer as the Head of the spiritual organism, of His Virgin Mother, and of all His Saints, were regarded as constituting a treasure of which His earthly Vicar was the guardian and dispenser. And it was held that by means of papal indulgences these merits were communicated to the less perfect members, the little ones, of the Christian flock; more, it was taught—this was the latest development—that they might be made available, in all their fulness, for the relief of souls in purgatory. The first instance of the application, upon a large scale, of this doctrine of indulgences was furnished by the Crusades. Whoever took the cross, Urban II. declared, gained a plenary indulgence which took the place of all penances. In time, the contribution of money towards a Crusade earned a like reward. Later, indulgences were similarly attached, by papal authority, to pilgrimages, to the building

of churches, the foundation of religious houses, the construction of bridges, and other good works, the performance of which was held to be equivalent to the severe and prolonged mortifications of the old penitential system, and to satisfy the temporal debt contracted by sin. Of course penitence and sacramental confession were always specified in the formal "Instruction to Sub-Commissaries, Penitentiaries, and Confessors," as conditions requisite for gaining the indulgence. It was further provided in this document that those of the faithful who, having no money, could give no alms, should earn their pardon by aiding the good work in respect of which it was granted, through prayer and fasting: "for the kingdom of heaven shall not stand more open to the rich than to the poor."

Such was the theory of indulgences. But history judges a system by its working in the world, not by its logical coherence as a set of abstract propositions. Moreover, Dr. Beard is unquestionably well warranted when he writes, "It would be easy to adduce many authoritative documents in which, for popular purposes, the nature and effect of indulgences are spoken of in a way quite inconsistent with the strictness of scholastic theory." He continues—and we may adopt his words—"What this doctrine became in the hands of preachers who were more solicitous to collect money than to keep within orthodox lines, we shall see before long; but, apart from actual abuse,

it is clear that from possible abuse no caution on the part of the Church authorities could save it. The distinctions involved were too fine for popular apprehension. What did the ignorant peasant who bought his 'Ablassbrief' know of the difference between guilt and penalty? between punishment on this side the grave and on the other? What he thought he was buying was forgiveness of his past sins, and, at the same time, liberty to commit more. . . . Whatever spiritual element there had at first been in the transaction, soon faded out of it. Attrition, the mere fear of punishment, was substituted for contrition, which involves the love of God. Soon, even attrition was taken for granted; and the magic documents were sold indiscriminately to all comers." * No student of the history of Luther's times, who pursues his studies without blinkers, can doubt that these words accurately describe that colossal scandal which Erasmus designated "the crime of false pardons."† There can be no doubt whatever—

* P. 208.

† He says in his *Praise of Folly*—the passage may very well have been in Dr. Beard's mind when writing the words just quoted—"What shall I say of those who flatter themselves so sweetly with counterfeit pardons for their crimes, who have measured out the duration of Purgatory without an error, as if by a water-clock, into ages, years, months and days, like the multiplication table? Suppose, for example, some tradesman, or soldier, or judge, who by some paltry payment from all his stealings, thinks the whole slough of his life is cleaned out at once, that all his perjuries, lusts, drunkennesses, strifes,

the evidence is too abundant and too overwhelming—that the vast majority of the preachers of indulgences soon came to be of the type of the "gentil pardonere" who lives for us in Chaucer's pages :—

> "For min entente is nat but for to winne,
> And no-thing for correccioun of sinne."

To the crowds who flocked to the indulgence fairs their message practically was, as Herr Kawerau bluntly puts it, that St. Peter for hard cash would open and guarantee heaven. Swift's parody of an indulgence letter represents, with substantial accuracy, the view taken of it by the ignorant and superstitious peasantry to whom it chiefly appealed.

So much concerning indulgences in general. As to the particular indulgence proclaimed by Leo X., which was the immediate occasion of Luther's revolt, its ostensible object, as we all know, was the provision of funds for rebuilding the basilica of St. Peter. But Leo X. was as impecunious as he was magnificent; and the well-informed shrewdly suspected that other and more pressing calls upon the Pontiff were defrayed from its proceeds. The purchasers of indulgences were, however, taught that the employment of the sums

murders, cheatings, perfidies, treacheries, are bought off as by a bargain, and so bought off that he is now at liberty to begin afresh a new series of sins!" And, in his *Utilissima Consultatio de Bello Turcarum*, he notes how, for money, you may have indulgences more than plenary, so that Purgatory is really in danger of being emptied.

paid by them was no affair of theirs. If they obtained the Pontifical document, they had their money's worth. And indiscreet curiosity regarding the mysteries of Papal finance was reprobated as indecent and temerarious. For the preaching of Leo's pardon, Germany was divided into three districts. One of them was constituted by the dioceses of Maintz, Magdeburg, and Halberstadt, together with the Mark of Brandenburg. Of this district the Archbishop of Maintz, Albert of Brandenburg, was appointed the Papal Commissary. His appointment throws a singular light upon the whole affair. The brother of the Margrave Joachim, he was from childhood destined to an ecclesiastical career, and, like Leo X., obtained in early youth some of the richest prizes of the Church. When he was barely eighteen he was appointed Canon of Maintz, to which a canonry of Magdeburg was shortly added. At twenty he became Archbishop of Magdeburg and Administrator of the neighbouring diocese of Halberstadt. At twenty-four he was elected Archbishop of Maintz, to which dignity was annexed the Primacy of Germany and the Archchancellorship of the Empire. Among the inducements offered to the Chapter of Maintz to elect him to that see was his undertaking to defray personally the fees payable to Rome for the *pallium*,—fees amounting to the enormous sum of twenty thousand gold gulden. This money,

and a further sum of ten thousand gold gulden, of which he had need, Archbishop Albert was obliged to borrow; and he obtained it from the great banking-house of the Fuggers at Augsburg. The new indulgence appeared to him to offer an excellent means of raising funds for repaying the Fuggers and for replenishing his own purse. On the 1st of August, 1514, he petitioned the Pope to commit to him the business of the pardon, throughout his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, for a period of eight years. And on the 15th of April, 1515, the concession sought was made to him by Leo X., on the conditions proposed by him: namely, that he should make an immediate payment of ten thousand gold gulden to the Papal Treasury, and that he should remit annually to Rome half the pecuniary proceeds of the preaching, the other half being retained by himself. It was at the same time stipulated between him and the Fuggers that the moneys coming to him as his share of "the holy business" (*das heylig negotium*) should, in the first instance, be applied to the liquidation of his debt to them; and it was arranged that the preachers of the indulgence should be accompanied by their clerks, furnished with duplicate keys of the chests in which the money was received. Such were the commercial aspects of this spiritual speculation.* It is a curious commentary upon the cynicism of the

* For a full account of it see Ehrenberg's *Das Zeitalter der Fugger*, vol. i. pp. 97–99.

age that no effort to conceal them was made either by the Pope or the Primate, both of whom had characters to lose. For Leo X. and Archbishop Albert, whatever their faults, are by no means bad specimens of the great ecclesiastical dignitaries of those times. Erasmus, a keen judge of men, had, as is evident from his correspondence, a sincere regard and esteem for them both.

Conspicuous among the Sub-Commissaries to whom the preaching of the pardons was entrusted was John Tetzel, of Leipzig, a friar of the Order of St. Dominic. His character has been differently estimated by Catholic and Protestant writers from his time to our own. But whether he was grave and pious, or dissolute and unprincipled, certain it is that he was endowed with gifts specially qualifying him for success in "the holy business." He appears to have united in himself the most telling qualities of a cheap-jack and a revivalist preacher; and had he lived in this age and country he would probably have been at least a major in the Salvation Army. The exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exceeding pain of punishment, the need of supernatural help for deliverance from Divine Justice, were all insisted upon by him with perfervid rhetoric, to the terror and amazement of his hearers; and then, by a natural and easy transition, he would fall to the commendation of his spiritual wares. "Avail yourselves," he would say, flourishing an indulgence letter, "Avail

yourselves of this sure safe-conduct from the Vicar of Christ. Know that all the merits of Jesus Christ are contained therein. A man will make the journey to Rome, or some other perilous journey, putting his money in the bank, and paying four or five per cent. to have it again at Rome or elsewhere. And will you not give a wretched quarter of a gulden for one of these pardons, by virtue of which you secure not money, but the reception of a divine and immortal soul into paradise?" And he would conclude with a harrowing description of the sufferings of the souls in purgatory; at that very moment, perchance, endured by the parents or children, it might be, of one of his hearers—sufferings from which they might be delivered by such a bagatelle.

Such, according to authentic documents * which have come down to us, was the staple of the preaching of this prince of pardoners. It is alleged, with what truth we cannot certainly determine, that sometimes he would go much further in his sermons; that he would magnify his office in the most transcendent manner, affirming that the Indulgence Cross, with the Papal arms upon it, was as potent as the Cross of Christ Himself; that he, Tetzel, by his pardons, had saved more souls than St. Peter by his preaching; that the moment the money of the purchaser

* See the articles on Tetzel in Herzog's *Real Encyklopädie* and Welzer and Welte's *Kirchenlexicon*, where the principal authorities are given.

of one of them chinked in the chest, that very moment a soul flew up from purgatory to paradise; nay, that they availed even for future and uncommitted sin.* Whether or no Tetzel in his zeal for "the holy business" ventured upon these and the like startling statements, certain it is that they were confidently attributed to him. Certain is it, too, that during the years 1516–17 the spirit of Luther was deeply stirred by them. It was on the 31st of October, in the latter year, that he took the step which is popularly regarded as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation by affixing to the door of the University Church at Wittenberg his famous ninety-five theses.

IV.

It is indubitable that neither Luther, nor any one else, at the time, attached any special importance to this act of his. What he desired was a

* Jortin, in his *Life of Erasmus* (vol. i. p. 117), quotes from Seckendorff the following story, which, whether true or not, is certainly amusing: "A gentleman of Leipzig went to Tetzel, and asked if he could sell him an indulgence beforehand for a certain crime which he would not specify and which he intended to commit. Tetzel said Yes, provided they could agree upon the price. The bargain was struck, the money paid, and the absolution delivered in due form. Soon after this the gentleman, knowing that Tetzel was going from Leipzig, well loaded with cash, waylaid him, robbed him and cudgelled him, and told him at parting that this was the crime for which he had purchased an absolution."

full discussion of the subject of papal pardons—regarding which theologians widely differed—principally for the sake of clearing his own mind. And academical disputations were a recognized means of attaining such an end. The 31st of October was the Vigil of All Saints, which was the Feast of the Dedication of the Castle Church at Wittenberg—a day on which crowds resorted thither, in quest of the copious indulgences to be gained by visiting its abundant relics; a very fit and proper day, Luther may well have thought, for raising the whole question of the nature and value of these pardons. It is absolutely clear that he did not put forward his theses as a body of propositions which he was prepared to maintain at all hazards. Indeed, if carefully examined, they will be found to be by no means consistent with one another. They were stated, as the preamble to them declares, "for love and desire of eliciting the truth," and were expressed in terms, as their author subsequently wrote to Leo X., which were "somewhat obscure and enigmatical." On the same day that these theses were published, Luther wrote to Archbishop Albert recounting the stories current concerning Tetzel's preaching, and begging that prelate, in the most earnest terms, for the love of the souls entrusted to him, to attend to the matter. Together with this letter he sent to the Primate a copy of his theses, "in order that his Illustrious Sublimity may see how undefined

and uncertain a thing is that doctrine of indulgence, of which the preachers dream as absolutely fixed and sure." The Archbishop returned no answer to this communication. But there is extant a letter from him to the Council charged with the administration of the dioceses of Maintz and Halberstadt, who had reported to him the action of "the audacious friar of Wittenberg." In this document he states, among other things, that he has sent all the papers to Rome; mentions the complaints which had reached him thence of the lavish expenditure incurred by Tetzel and Tetzel's subordinates in the performance of their duties; orders them to lessen it; and blames the Sub-Commissaries for unseemly speech and behaviour, both in preaching and in the inns they frequented, to the detriment of "the holy business." "The Archbishop," Dr. Beard observes, "tacitly admits that there is some ground for Luther's complaints; but he does not, on that account, intend to put an end to a lucrative traffic."

It appears to me that no one can carefully examine those ninety-five theses of Luther's without being struck by their moderation. Earlier theologians had attacked the whole theory of indulgences in much sharper and bitterer tones. Moreover, the theses contain no fundamental propositions of a theological system; no dogmatic determinations opposed to the dominant divinity. True it is that the theory upon which indulgences

were based, was difficult to reconcile with the doctrine as to faith which Luther had excogitated, and which he was gradually growing to regard as the very essence of Christianity. But it is certain, if anything is certain, that he had no presentiment of the work he was beginning when he nailed that paper to the door of the Church at Wittenberg. Nor, on the other hand, had the ecclesiastical authorities any presentiment of it. They were of those whose eyes the god of this world had blinded. And their blindness to the signs of the times, and the blundering which came of it, served the cause of Luther's revolution quite as much as the daring and doggedness of its author. It is not my intention here to pursue the twice-told tale of his transformation—as a recent Catholic writer has expressed it—"from a harmless necessary reformer into a needless and noxious rebel." I may, however, observe, borrowing a phrase from Cardinal Newman's *Apologia*, that there were three distinct and separate blows which broke him.

The first was the scandal of the indulgences upon which I have been dwelling, and which the ecclesiastical authorities did nothing to abate. In truth, indulgences had become a recognized expedient of Papal finance. And Leo X., in whose veins flowed the mercantile blood of the Medici, was not the man to attenuate an abundant source of Pontifical revenue, even if his

pecuniary necessities had permitted him to do so. He was liberal enough in matters of theology, and would listen with pleasure to disputants arguing for and against the soul's immortality. But Luther's attack upon his pardons touched him nearly. A year passed away, filled with brisk controversy between Luther and his opponents, the chief practical effect of which was gradually to mature and clarify his theological ideas, and to lead him, ever more and more decidedly, to express himself in a manner distasteful to the ecclesiastical authorities. In a letter written early in 1518 to Trutwetter, his old master at Erfurt, he uses these remarkable and significant words: "I absolutely believe that it is impossible to reform the Church unless the canons, the decretals, the scholastic theology, philosophy, and logic, as they are now treated, are utterly rooted up, and new studies put in their place." He adds, with an unusual touch of self-knowledge, "I may seem to you no logician, nor perhaps am I; but one thing I know—that in the defence of this opinion I fear no man's logic." The whole business was supremely distasteful to Leo X., whose counsellors were almost all of Cardinal Soderini's opinion, that "the true danger to the Holy See was not in Germany but in Italy, where the Pope needed money to defend himself."*

* A curious commentary upon these words of the Roman Cardinal in the sixteenth century was supplied by the First Napoleon in the nineteenth. In his speech to the Corps

"Heresy," the Cardinal further observed, "had always been put down by force, and not by attempts at reformation." Leo saw no way out of the difficulty but this time-honoured way of repression. In the autumn of 1518 instructions were sent to Cardinal Cajetan, the Papal Nuncio in Germany, to get hold of Luther, keep him safely, and bring him to Rome. The instructions could not be executed. An Imperial safe-conduct protected Luther during his audiences of the Cardinal at Augsburg. They lasted just a week and led to nothing. Then Luther departed secretly from the city, having lodged with the Legate an appeal, not merely from him to the Pope, but from the Pope badly informed to the Pope better informed ("a sanctissimo Domino Leone X. male informato ad melius informandum"). It was just a year after the publication of his theses that he reached Wittenberg. The Elector Frederick turned a deaf ear to Cajetan's entreaties for his surrender or his expulsion. And he now replaced the appeal he had made to the Pope better informed, by one to a future General Council.

There can be no question that the inaction of the Papal authorities with regard to the abuses of

Législatif on June 16, 1811, he expressed himself as follows; "Si la moitié de l'Europe s'est séparée de l'Église de Rome, on peut l'attribuer spécialement à la contradiction qui n'a cessé d'exister entre les vérités et les principes de la religion qui sont pour tout l'univers, et des prétentions et des intérêts qui ne regardaient qu'un très petit coin de l'Italie.'

indulgences, developed in Luther's mind the seeds of rebellion, years before planted there, and produced an ever-deepening distrust of the whole ecclesiastical system with which those abuses were bound up. But further. Indomitably courageous as he undoubtedly was, he had no taste for martyrdom;* and the designs of the Court of Rome against his liberty—it might be his life—filled him with not unnatural indignation. The only reply which the ecclesiastical authorities had to make to his testimony against scandals, was an endeavour to seize his person. "I saw," he says, "the thunderbolt launched against me. *I* was the sheep that muddied the wolf's water. Tetzel escaped, and *I* was to let myself be taken!" The growth of his anti-papal opinions went on apace under this stimulus. Still, an open breach with Rome does not, as yet, present itself to his mind. In February, 1519, we find him, as the result of his conference with Miltitz, agreeing to submit the impugned articles of his teaching to some learned Bishop; to recant any errors that might be brought home to him; and no more to impugn the honour of the Roman Church. Nay,

* He possessed the cunning as well as the courage of a German peasant. Mozley remarks that he was "resolutely cautious." "With a boldness equal to facing the blindest hazard, he never moved without a definite pledge of security. He obstinately insisted on safe-conducts. . . . He proved the saying that fear mixes largely with true courage, and that the better part of valour is discretion." (Vol. i. p. 367.)

he further engaged to put forth a pamphlet in the German language, declaratory of his orthodoxy, and to write a loyal letter to the Sovereign Pontiff. That engagement he at once proceeded to fulfil, with characteristic impetuosity. The pamphlet, which he called *An Instruction* (*Unterricht*) on certain articles alleged against him by his opponents, is a curious document. In it he professes his belief in the Intercession of Saints; in Purgatory; in Indulgences, as a release from satisfaction for sin, though a less thing than good works; in good works, not as making men holy, but as capable of being performed by one who is holy; in the supremacy of the Roman Church, as honoured by God above others; in the duty of maintaining ecclesiastical unity, and of obeying the commands of the Pope. His letter to Leo X. is conceived in the same spirit.

I see no reason to question the sincerity of Luther in thus writing, although, unquestionably, in his private correspondence at the time, he uses very different language. His mind was in a fluctuating state. It was teeming with half-formed ideas, which might shape themselves in one way or in another, as events determined. He did not see where he was going. He did not discern the consequences of his own principles. He desired reform. He did not contemplate revolution. It might have been expected by those who read his *Instruction* and his *Letter to the Pope*, that his

revolt was at an end. And so, perhaps, it might have been but for the "ardor civium prava jubentium." The truest foes of the Roman Church (it is an old story—and a new!) have ever been her insolent and aggressive friends, "who have conducted themselves as if no responsibility attached to wild words and overbearing deeds; who have stated truths in the most paradoxical form, and stretched principles till they were close upon snapping." Bishop Creighton is well warranted when he observes that "the advisers of the Pope had no thought of concession and were inspired by the spirit of Cajetan rather than that of Militz," and that it was "the stubborn conservatism of the old-fashioned theologians [which] gave force to Luther's revolt." Prominent among them was John Maier, commonly known as Eck, from the Bavarian village which was the place of his nativity: a born disputant, whose wide reading, prodigious memory, vast command of words, syllogistic mind, sonorous voice, and supreme self-confidence, eminently qualified him to triumph in those academical tournaments which were then the fashion. In that famous disputation at Leipzig (June, 1519), he succeeded in fixing upon Luther Hussite views regarding the Apostolic See, and in extorting from him the declaration that General Councils can err and have erred. He obtained a dialectical triumph. But Luther obtained, not only a clearer insight into his own

views, but a vast advertisement. "The net result of the disputation," writes Bishop Creighton, "was that Eck's reputation was staked upon crushing Luther; that two parties began to form in Germany; and that the time for conciliation was passed. Luther was more and more resolved to appeal to public opinion. Eck was convinced that he had unmasked a dangerous heretic." *

Luther returned from the Leipzig disputation to Wittenberg, and there pursued his academical and pastoral duties with his wonted energy. In his correspondence at this period we may follow the workings of his mind regarding the Seven Sacraments and the priesthood of all Christians—questions upon which he was soon to declare himself in a sense opposed to that of the Catholic Church. But he seems still curiously unconscious of the course in which he is drifting. It is rather from the practical than the dogmatic side that he contemplates the matters which chiefly occupy his thoughts. No doubt the more logical and systematizing intellect of Melanchthon, who had gone to Wittenberg as Professor of Greek in 1518, soon began to exercise over him a considerable influence. "The little Greek," he writes, "beats even me in theology. I am not ashamed to give up my opinion when it differs from this grammarian's." It was not until February, 1520, when Hutten's republication of Laurentius Valla's book on the

* *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, vol. v. p. 116.

Donation of Constantine fell into his hands, that the view of the Pope as anti-Christ, which dominated his later teaching, really took hold of him. The discovery that the document then usually relied on as the basis of the Pontiff's temporal princedom is an impudent forgery, was a second blow to him; perhaps a more crushing blow than the toleration by the ecclesiastical authorities of the abuses of indulgences. He had no more doubted the genuineness of the Donation of Constantine than he had doubted the genuineness of St. Matthew's Gospel. "It is like a revelation to him," writes Dr. Beard, "that the power which is exercised with such utter disregard of righteousness, should be founded on a lie."

In the spring of 1520 a third blow fell upon him. The *Epitome* of Prierias, published a year before, came into his hands, and broke the last tie which bound him to Rome. It was a statement of propositions, asserting the extremest views of the Papal prerogatives, which that Roman theologian —an old opponent of his, who held the dignified office of Master of the Sacred Palace—proposed to establish in a larger work. And in the mind in which he then was, as Dr. Beard observes, it "angered him in the highest degree: he thought that the book had been written with the express purpose of destroying the authority of Councils and therefore of invalidating his own appeal." He immediately republished it with a commentary of

his own, in which he roundly declares, "If Rome thus believes and teaches, with the knowledge of Popes and Cardinals, which I hope is not the case, . . . I freely declare that the true anti-Christ is sitting in the temple of God, and is reigning at Rome, that empurpled Babylon, and that the Roman Curia is the synagogue of Satan." And in his Epilogue he uses language of extreme fierceness: "If we strike thieves with the gallows, robbers with the sword, heretics with fire, why do we not much more attack in arms these Masters of perdition, these Cardinals, these Popes, and all this sink of the Roman Sodom which has without end corrupted the Church of God, and wash our hands in their blood?"

V.

Dr. Beard is well warranted in calling this "the turning-point of the Reformation." Luther, in one of his letters, says: "I am certainly of a quick hand and a ready memory, so that what I write rather flows from me than is deliberately set down." But what he wrote in his haste he maintained at his leisure. His doggedness was as great as his daring. "That vehement genius, that Achilles of men who knows not what it is to yield," Erasmus called him. And in truth he seems now to have made up his mind that nothing

remained for him but complete rebellion. Eck was at Rome calling attention to the numerous passages in his writings which savoured, and more than savoured, of heresy, and was moving heaven and earth to secure his formal and complete condemnation by the Apostolic See. Of this Luther was well aware. And he resolved to be beforehand with his adversary. In June, 1520, he writes to Spalatin that he intends to address to the newly-elected Emperor, Charles V., and to the German nobility, a letter appealing against the tyranny and worthlessness of the Curia. "The secret of anti-Christ must be made manifest; it is self urged thereto; it can no longer remain hidden." Next month the promised letter appeared. Kolde truly remarks that it is no mere occasional document, but the outcome of anxious, earnest toil and of a well-devised plan. It was one secret of Luther's marvellous influence that even in his most passionate moments he had himself in hand. He was the master, not the slave, of his fiercest impulses. His tone throughout this letter, certainly one of his finest productions, is that of a prophet upon whose lips is the burden of Germany. "The time for silence is gone; the time for speech is come," are the words with which he begins his Dedication to Nicholas von Amsdorff. And, in fiery tones of denunciation, warning, encouragement, he points the Emperor, the princes, the nobility, to the way in which Germany may throw

off the Roman yoke and reform herself. Three walls, he declares, have been built up by Rome against reform; walls which, like those of Jericho, shall fall before the divinely-inspired trumpet blast. The first of these is the essential distinction between the clergy and laity: whereas, according to the Gospel, all Christian men are priests. The second is the claim of the Church alone to interpret Holy Writ: whereas such interpretation is the personal prerogative of each individual Christian. The third is the claim of the Pope to be the only summoner of a General Council; whereas in the Primitive Church most General Councils were not summoned by the Pope at all. In this trenchant document he lays the axe to the root of the hierarchical conception whereon the Catholic Church is based, and practically asserts what the Germans call "die Kirchenhoheit des Staates"—the subordination of religion to the civil power.

All the main lines of Luther's most distinctive subsequent teaching are clearly indicated in this pamphlet. The immediate effect of it was enormous. It quickly reached every sort and condition of the German people. Meanwhile Eck had procured at Rome the issue of the Bull, *Exsurge Domine*, and had been constituted Papal Protonothary for its publication in Germany. It expressly condemned forty-one propositions extracted from Luther's works prior to his *Appeal to*

the Christian Nobility—which, of course, was not before the authors of the Bull—and ordered him to recant within sixty days, under pain of excommunication. Rumours of it had reached Luther in July; but it was not until the end of September that definite tidings arrived at Wittenberg of its issue, and of Eck's commission to execute it. Luther at first affected to treat it as a forgery; but soon its authenticity was placed beyond doubt. Then, encouraged by popular support on all sides, he proceeded to take even more decisive steps. In October, 1520, he published his treatise *On the Babylonish Captivity of the Church*, in which he attacks the Catholic doctrine of the Sacraments, reducing them to three—Baptism, Penance, and the Eucharist—and denies the Sacrifice of the Mass. In the same month appeared his book *On the Freedom of a Christian Man*, wherein is developed, to the fullest extent, the individualism which was really his underlying idea. The ecclesiastical authorities were now engaged in burning Luther's books, as commanded in the Bull, not without tumultuous expressions of popular dissatisfaction. Luther determined to retaliate in kind. On the 10th of December, before the Elster Gate of Wittenberg, he solemnly committed to the flames the Bull, together with the book of Papal Decretals, and a few treatises of Eck's. It was a highly dramatic performance, and greatly impressed—as no doubt Luther had intended—the

imagination of the German people. The shout of the students who looked on—almost all enthusiastic disciples of his—found an echo throughout Europe. The Pope, Carlyle finely says, "should not have provoked that shout. It was the shout of the awakening of nations."

Meanwhile the Papal Legate, Aleander, was not idle. He urged the Emperor to deal with Luther as a convicted heretic. Charles himself probably inclined to that course; but, in the existing temper of the German people and of some of the German princes, it would have been difficult to follow. At last it was settled—much to Aleander's disgust—that the affair should be referred to the Diet about to meet at Worms. There are few more dramatic scenes in history than the appearance of Luther there. It was on the morning of the 16th of April, 1521, that, protected by the Imperial safe-conduct, he entered the city—his journey thither had been like a triumphant progress — clad in the habit of his Order, and seated in an open carriage, the herald Deutschland riding before him. Many attached to the Court of the Saxon Elector had ridden out to meet him. The watchman on the tower of the Cathedral blew a loud blast as the cavalcade approached; and thousands rushed to see the man whose fame had gone abroad throughout Germany. It seemed the entry of a conqueror: not the submission of a convicted heretic. Confidence, not unnaturally,

flowed into Luther's heart. "God will be with me," he said, as he alighted from the carriage at the lodging prepared for him. In due course he appeared before the Diet; and it is worth while to try to picture the scene:—Charles presiding over the august assembly, clad in all the majesty of the Cæsars; the Papal Legates by his side; six electoral princes grouped around him; a vast concourse of the nobility and dignified clergy ranged below; and there, confronting this pageant of state with his "demoniac eyes" (as Cardinal Aleander called them) and "rude plebeian face, with its huge craglike brow and bones," "the solitary monk that shook the world"; persisting day after day in his refusal to recant, and at last, when the Diet broke up, confounded by his "stubborn hardihood," bursting into the impassioned outbreak, "Here stand I: I can do no other: God help me, Amen." * They had pressed him for a clear and definite answer. And they got one—that, unless convinced by proofs of Scripture or evident reason, recant he could not and would not, since to act against conscience was unsafe and dishonourable. They had asked him again: Did he really believe that a General Council could err?

* The authenticity of this utterance was unquestioned till 1869. The first seven words of it—"Hier stehe ich: ich kann nicht anders"—are now rejected by certain critics—by Janssen among others—as an unhistorical embellishment of the Lutheran legend. The question is fully and fairly discussed by Oncken, *Luthers Fortleben in Staat und Volk*, pp. 26–29.

He replied that the Council of Constance had, in many particulars, decreed against plain and clear texts of Holy Scripture. It was enough. An Imperial edict solemnly proscribed him as a heretic, forbade all men to house, shelter, or nourish him, and commanded them to lay hands upon him and deliver him up to the Imperial officers. It also ordered his writings to be burnt.

Luther departed from Worms, protected by his safe-conduct, and then disappeared for a while—carried off by a friendly ambuscade to the Castle of Wartburg. There he abode in safety, while the bonfires of his writings made in various places but served to increase the demand for them. Archbishop Albert of Maintz wrote to the Pope in July, 1521: "Since the Bull of your Holiness and the edict of the Emperor, the number of Lutherans is increased. There are very few laymen to be found who simply and honestly side with the clergy; while a great number of the priests favour Luther, and a majority are ashamed to support the Roman Church." The edict of Worms remained unexecuted. Its execution was impossible in the existing condition of Germany. In March, 1522, Luther left his hiding-place and returned to Wittenberg, whence he openly promoted, and, as far as he could, regulated, the religious revolution now in full progress. He increased daily in audacity and power. He was profuse alike in libels and apologies. He attacked the Sovereign

Pontiff with the utmost scurrility and defied the whole authority of the Church. He drew into his quarrel with it princes who saw and seized the opportunity for their own aggrandizement, and for whom liberty of conscience meant liberty to pillage ecclesiastical property. In 1523 the Legates of the new Pope Adrian to the Diet of Nürnberg demanded the execution of the edict of Worms. The Diet concluded "to carry it out," "as well as they were able and as far as possible." In other words, as Bishop Creighton observes, "the Diet affirmed the edict, but admitted that it was impossible to act upon it."

There is a great similarity in the history of revolutions. The ferment of the new doctrines, of which they are the outward expression, ever works to issues little anticipated by their authors. It was rather satisfaction in his denunciation of abuses than sympathy with his opinions, which won for Luther the support of the educated. To the lower orders of the people he appeared as an apostle of liberty, which, as might have been expected, soon displayed itself as lawlessness. "The discontent of the German peasantry with their hard lot," writes Bishop Creighton, "found a justification and a basis for action in the teaching of the Lutheran preachers. Men who were urged to judge the lives and doings of their spiritual rulers, naturally applied the same principles to judge their temporal rulers, and found the

oppressors of their bodies at least as culpable as the oppressors of their souls." It is impossible to withhold a meed of sympathy from the insurgent peasants, whose original demands, as contained in their Twelve Articles, were not, upon the whole, unreasonable. Luther, himself "a peasant and the son of a peasant," plainly told the rulers of Germany in 1523, "People cannot and will not any longer endure your tyranny and exactions." And when the peasants first took up arms, while counselling to them moderation, he denounced the oppressions of the princes and lords as the one cause of their uprising. No doubt their excesses disgusted and alarmed him. But the extreme violence of his invectives against them—even after the rebellion was practically crushed—is curious. "Dear lords, smite, stab, destroy," he most needlessly urges the triumphant nobles. He continues, "Whoever dies fighting for authority is a martyr before God. . . . I pray every one to depart from the peasants as from the Devil himself. . . . If any man think this too hard, let him remember that rebellion is irreparable." It is odd language from one who, whatever else he was or was not, was certainly an arch-rebel.

The issue of the Peasants' War was unquestionably disastrous to Luther's popularity with the multitude. Such hold as he had possessed over the educated classes was largely shattered by his controversy with Erasmus. There had never been much real sympathy between him and the great

Humanist. They had, indeed, common enemies in the obscurantist clergy and the defenders of decadent scholasticism. And that was all they had in common. The letters of Erasmus from 1519 to 1524 contain a vivid picture of his doubts and difficulties in those "most brisk and giddy-paced times." He dreaded equally the triumph of Luther and the triumph of Luther's adversaries, as likely to be equally prejudicial to the cause of good learning. At last, in 1524, unwillingly, and in obedience to the call of duty, he gave the world his book *De Libero Arbitro*, where he refutes, in language the more cogent from its scholarly courtesy and philosophic calm, the Lutheran theory of the servitude of the will, which, as his clear eyes discerned, was absolutely destructive of the ethical basis of life. Luther's reply was equally arrogant, scurrilous, and ineffective. Michelet has described him, correctly enough, as "writhing under the blows of Erasmus," and "plunging deeply," in his efforts to parry them, "into fatalism and immorality." It was a discreditable spectacle; and did much to alienate from him such of the more thoughtful and candid minds throughout Europe as still inclined to regard him favourably. A third and more crushing blow to his authority was given by his marriage. Like old January, he had conceived a violent desire

> "that he
> Mighte ones knowen of that blisful lif
> That is betwix an husbond and his wif."

He gratified his desire just at the time when its gratification must cause most consternation to his friends, most jubilation to his foes. To both friends and foes, his marriage was an inexplicable event. And inexplicable it still remains, unless, indeed, we are content with Nisard's somewhat flippant explanation: "To distract himself from the horrors of the Peasants War, he fell in love with a nun, and married her." Certain it is that this proceeding lowered him not only in the estimation of the world at large, but, as Mozley observes, "in his own estimation. No theory could make the marriage of a monk and a nun not ignominious. No theory could make it necessary for him to marry at all."

We may say that from the year 1525 Luther's personal authority largely suffered an eclipse. The movement initiated by him became much more secular than religious. Its control passed into the hands of the princes, whose despotism had been vastly strengthened by the suppression of the peasants' insurrection. In 1526 the Diet of Speyer provisionally settled the religious difficulty by determining that "each State should, as regards the edict of Worms, so live, rule, and bear itself, as it thought it could answer therefor to God and the Emperor." This decree of the Diet of Speyer may be taken as setting the seal to Luther's revolution. It recognized—we may say sanctioned—the division of Germany into Catholic and Pro-

testant States, though the term Protestant was not invented until three years later. It practically affirmed * the principle "Cujus regio ejus religio," finally and formally adopted at the Peace of Westphalia. Twenty years more of life remained to Luther; but they contain no incident worth noting here. His organization of the new religious communion which he established in the territories where his doctrines were received, his disputations with, his anathemas upon, other religious innovators whose views differed from his own, his not specially interesting daily life as a German bourgeois (*als Hausvater und Privatmann*), his morbid superstitions and grotesque hallucinations, are described at greater or less length by his various biographers. To their pages I must refer those of my readers who desire knowledge of these things. For myself I shall close this chapter by briefly touching upon the chief causes which contributed to the success of the revolution associated with his name, and by pointing to the most important of its practical results.

* Janssen has a long discussion on the "Reichsabschied zu Speyer," his conclusion being that it "bildet keineswegs eine positive Rechtsgrundlage wohl aber der Ausgangspunkt neuer Landeskirchen" (vol. iii. p. 52). There can be no doubt that this decree was largely due to Clement VII.'s quarrel with the Emperor Charles and partisanship of Francis I.

VI.

Now, unquestionably, as I have already insisted, the Lutheran Revolution was primarily a revolt against abuses which had become intolerable. The evidence on this matter is so various, so abundant, so conclusive, as to be absolutely overwhelming. Let it suffice here to cite only one witness—a most illustrious, a most unwilling witness—whose testimony is beyond cavil. Pope Adrian, a man of inflexible integrity and profound piety, discerned the deep-seated corruptions of the Church with the clearness of spiritual illumination, and confessed them with the fearlessness of a minister of the God of Truth. His letter to the Diet of Nürnberg is one of the most remarkable documents that ever emanated from a Roman Pontiff.* He deplores the abominations which have long defiled the Apostolic See—"abuses in matters spiritual; excesses in ecclesiastical prerogatives; the prostitution of the holiest things to the basest uses." He does not deny that the Roman Curia is the very source and fount of all this evil, and that its reformation is the first and most imperative of duties.† But purity of intention, singleness of purpose, fidelity to the ideal of his high office, were

* See Pallavicino, Book II., c. vii. The original of this letter is given in *Fasciculus rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum*, printed in 1535.

† "Ut primum Curia hæc unde forte hoc malum processit, reformetur."

not sufficient for these things. Gifts which Adrian did not possess were requisite for the herculean task which lay before him. He failed, and died before, perhaps, he had realized his failure; taken away from the evil to come. As I pointed out in the first chapter, from the thirteenth century the need of reformation in the head and members, so earnestly desired by Adrian, had been deeply felt. The literature of the time teems with evidence of this fact. The indignation of saints, the invective of schismatics, the irony of satirists, all tell the same tale. But every effort to purify the Church failed before the dogged opposition of the Roman Curia. That opposition was natural enough. Many, perhaps most, of the places in the Papal Court had been bought by officials who had a vested interest in the abuses on which they lived; and the Papacy was, in some sort, enforced to maintain the system on which the Curia grew fat. Religion was converted into merchandise. It is one of Erasmus's sharp and true sayings: "Christ drove out of the Temple those who bought and sold; but those who buy and sell have driven Christ out of the Church." The exactions of Rome were a byword throughout Europe; and nowhere had they been more excessive than in Germany, whence, the Emperor Maximilian declared, the Papal Court drew a revenue a hundredfold greater than his own.

Of all these exactions, those connected with the

preaching of Papal pardons were, perhaps, the most impudent. "The Roman Curia must be lost to all sense of shame," Erasmus wrote to Colet in 1518; "for what can be more shameless than these repeated indulgences?" * Professor Brewer does not hesitate to call them "a project devised between the temporal and spiritual rulers of Europe for collecting subsidies from the poor and labouring classes." † No doubt this is an accurate account of them, viewed from their mercantile side. Equally beyond doubt is it that among the crowds who bought them and trusted in them, the great verities of Christianity had been overlaid by a multitude of superstitions, at best childish, but too often criminous. There is ever in man—it springs from the essential ground of human nature—a tendency to substitute external for internal religion: the washing of cups and platters for the weightier matters of the law. Seldom, perhaps, has that tendency been carried so far as in the age when Luther arose. And nowhere was it more singularly exemplified than in the Mendicant Orders. There is no more curious, no sadder story in ecclesiastical annals, than that of their swift decline from the high ideals with which they

* Epis. cccv. (App.)

† *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic*, vol. ii. p. 1. He points out: "The temporal sovereigns of Europe made it a condition of allowing the indulgence to be preached, that they were to receive a portion of the money realised by it." *Ibid.*, p. cciv.

began. It is hardly too much to say that in two centuries the sons of St. Francis and St. Dominic had lost well-nigh all trace of their spiritual parentage; and, from men so far erected above themselves as to be a little lower than the angels, had very generally sunk below the average level of secular life. The monastic orders—properly so called—no doubt maintained on the whole a higher tone; but they were out of touch with that great spiritual and intellectual movement of the age, which troubled their cloistered ease and opulent ignorance. As a body, they regarded with unconcealed aversion the newly-awakened interest both in the sacred and profane literature of antiquity. Grammatical and religious research, Hebrew and Greek, commentaries on Cicero or St. Jerome, the exposition of St. Paul's Epistles and the interpretation of Homer and Virgil, were alike suspect to them. Among the parish priests the corruption of life was unquestionably great. At Augsburg, during the discussion raised concerning the marriage of the clergy, the Catholic members of the Diet—Janssen notes—"did not deny the frightful fact of widespread sacerdotal concubinage." * Meanwhile, in the very centre of the Christian world, there reigned a culture largely Pagan, which looked with indifference upon the spiritual and moral degradation of Christendom, and found its chief practical

* Vol. iii. p. 188.

interest in the tortuous and bloodstained politics of Italy.

> "Not swaying to this faction, or to that;
> Not making his high place the lawless perch
> Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage ground
> For pleasure;"

sings Tennyson. But this is precisely what the Popes of that period did. The Pontiffs who filled the Apostolic Chair from Sixtus IV. to Clement VII.—to speak of them only—no doubt varied much in their character and conduct. But, with the single exception of Adrian VI., the whiteness of whose Pontificate serves chiefly to illuminate the surrounding darkness, they were, to a large extent, dead to the momentous responsibilities and oblivious of the august traditions of their great office. The humanistic parasites who surrounded them, looked on with cynical amusement at the curious spectacle which they presented. Perhaps that cynicism never found more perfect expression than in the epigram—surely one of the most pungent ever written—wherewith Sannazarro celebrated his patron Leo X., dead without the last Sacraments.

> "Sacra sub extrema si forte requiritis hora
> Cur Leo non poterat sumere—vendiderat." *

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* Without the Church's Sacraments Pope Leo died, I'm told;
What wonder? How could he enjoy what he himself had sold?

One chief reason, then, of Luther's success is to be found in the religious and moral conditions of the age into which he was born. "No one can deny," said Erasmus, writing in 1522, "that Luther had a most excellent part to play, and that he had the applause of people in general when he began to act in the almost forgotten interest of Christ. . . . The world was asphyxiated with scholastic opinions, with human constitutions: nothing was heard of but indulgences, compositions, and the power of the Roman Pontiff. . . . And among the rulers of the Church there were those who seek not the things which are of Jesus Christ, but who, like Demas, love this present world."* But the intellectual conditions of the time also served the cause of Luther's Revolution. In the early sixteenth century the secularising movement, of which I spoke in the third chapter, had culminated: the ideal of life and society which had dominated the Middle Ages—the medieval *Weltanschauung* the Germans call it—had lost its hold. The renewed acquaintance with classical antiquity had brought before the European intellect other conceptions; the invention and spread of printing had widely diffused them; learning had lost its distinctively ecclesiastical character; the scholastic philosophy had sunk into discredit. The old vigorous reasoning of its great masters had been supplanted by a

* Ep. DCXXXV.

barren logic and—in Melanchthon's phrase—"a garrulous dialectic," devoted to the forms of thought and of propositions symbolising thought, to the relations of judgments to one another, to the component parts of various ideas and words. The sharpest and best minds devoted themselves to subtle sterile analyses, to hairsplitting definitions, to endless divisions and idlest distinctions, to an incredible casuistry of all possibilities. "Omne studium vestrum est in elenchis vanisque cavillationibus," complained Æneas Sylvius to the University of Vienna. Nisard has pungently characterized the philosophy dominant at the opening sixteenth century as "an amalgam of the corrupted tradition of Aristotle with the not less corrupted tradition of Christianity."

Erasmus, more than any one else, represents the revolt of the intellect against this philosophy, for which, as we saw in the third chapter, he substituted the fruitful culture of antiquity, Christian and pre-Christian. There can be no question that Erasmus, and the movement of which Erasmus is the chief representative, served the cause of Luther, who, in a memorable letter, sought the support of the great Humanist; but his overtures were coldly received. Erasmus from the first distrusted him, and feared that his hot temper would bring about "a universal revolution" fatal to the progress of good letters. The event justified this fear. I shall have to touch

upon that hereafter. Here I should note the fulness of intellectual life, the literary activity in the great German towns, in the second decade of the sixteenth century. The Reuchlin controversy is a signal token of it. Bishop Creighton remarks, "that controversy was a foretaste of what was to come," and, as I noted in the last chapter, well points out that "the real importance of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* lay in its success in popularising the conception of a 'stupid party' opposed to the party of progress." Cardinal Aleander, himself a distinguished scholar, has left striking testimony of the change that had come over the Teutonic mind in the years of which I am speaking. When he visited Germany in 1511, he found that nation devoted to the Church above all other nations. When he returned as Legate in 1521, its tone and temper had entirely altered. The Humanists, who formerly had exhibited the greatest respect for him, showed themselves his bitterest enemies now that he had undertaken the cause of the Church against Luther.

Unquestionably this change of tone was due, to some extent, to the growth of a spirit of nationality throughout Europe. In other countries that spirit had displayed itself in the consolidation of the existing thrones. In Germany it found no sufficient outlet in the political sphere; and it assumed the form of hatred against Rome. Its best known representative is Ulrich von Hutten,

whose *Vadiscus seu Trias Romana*, a sweeping indictment of Papal abuses, was published in April, 1520. It is significant that when Charles V.—Spaniard as he was—was elected to the Imperial throne, Luther hoped to find in the new Cæsar an anti-Roman champion. It was his aspiration that God would inspire the youthful Kaiser to hold out a helping hand to the suffering German nation—"seine Hand zu reichen der elenden deutsche Nation." And there can be no doubt that the national tone assumed by him in his *Address to the German Nobility* contributed largely to the signal success of that memorable manifesto.

In the intolerable religious abuses of the time, in the intellectual awakening which characterized it, and in the growth of a spirit of nationality, we may, then, discern causes which vastly aided the Lutheran Revolution. Another cause, and assuredly a not less potent one, is to be found in the character and endowments of the man himself. It is notable that his great qualities and his great defects served him equally well; as will be evident if we clear away the atmosphere of legend, friendly and hostile, which has surrounded him and shrouded from us the real person. Bayle observes: "In the falsehoods which have been published concerning Martin Luther, no regard has been had either to probability or to the rules of the art of slandering." This is so. But his eulogists have sinned equally in another direction. He has himself given us the

true key to his character in his well-known boast that he was "a peasant and the son of a peasant." Yes; that is true. Luther was first and before all things a peasant: a German peasant—*Germanissimus*, we may say. From first to last his tone and temper are those of a peasant. He has the mind of a peasant, full of ardent and tumultuous passions, utterly undisciplined, coarse and material in its view of all things, human and divine. He has the virtues of a peasant: doggedness of purpose, indefatigable energy, bull-dog courage. He has the vices of a peasant: extravagance and excess, blind trust and incurable suspicion, boastful self-confidence, and the narrow-mindedness of intense subjectivity and most restricted intellectual vision. His speech is ever that of a peasant. His mind was quite uncritical. Grace of culture he despised. But he wielded with supreme dominion the High Dutch dialect spoken by his countrymen, and made of it the German language. "Ein hochgewaltiger Meister der deutsche Sprache," he has been called; and with good reason. "His expression (*Ausdruck*)," Janssen observes, "is rich and pithy (*kernig*); his exposition full of movement and life; his similes, with all their simplicity, seize and fire the imagination; he drew from the richest sources of the tongue of the people; in popular eloquence few have come near him." His words are instinct with life. They burn with purpose and power. "He flashes out illumination from

him," Carlyle well says: "his smiting idiomatic phrases seem to cleave into the very secret of the matter." And this marvellous power of expression doubtless came from the intensity and directness of his insight. "Those demoniac eyes of his," which so impressed Cardinal Aleander, were true symbols of his mental vision. He saw only one side of any question; nay, only a small part of even one side. But he saw it as no one else. And he made his hearers, his readers, see it as he saw it, and believe in his belief. There are few things more notable about him than his extraordinary personal ascendancy over his followers: even those of them who, like Melanchthon, were greatly his superiors in intellectual cultivation. It was an ascendancy, as Nisard notes, which kept well-nigh all of them under his yoke until his death: "soumis quoique frémissants."

But further. The multitude are swayed much more by passion than by reasoning, which few of them can follow or understand. Candour and conscientiousness in controversy they are quite incapable of appreciating. And no less candid and conscientious controversialist than Luther ever lived. Caricature and calumny, rancorous invective and reckless misrepresentation, were his ordinary polemical weapons. Of all the stimulants to popular passion, abuse is the most potent. To Luther must be conceded the distinction of being *facile princeps* in the art of vituperation. No

writer with whom I am acquainted comes within measurable distance of him in power of fierce flagellation and fetid foulness. A really astonishing amalgam of unmeasured violence and unrestrained vulgarity does duty with him for argument. To call names, the vilest and most virulent, is merely his method of signifying disagreement. To give one example merely, the following are some of the expressions which he applies to Aristotle in the early part of his career, when he had by no means fully stirred up the gift that was within him:—Arch-liar; devil; false and godless hypocrite; arch-carper, urging so many pros and cons that no one knows what he is driving at; Proteus; three-headed Cerberus; three-bodied Geryon; sycophant; vicious swindler; damned, proud, knavish heathen; destroyer of pious doctrines; poisonous and deadly enemy of Christ; hangman of souls.* No doubt this touch—and more than touch—of earth in Luther, contributed largely to his vast popularity when he first came forward as an Apostle of Revolution. Of

* These expressions are all taken from Luther's earlier works, published between 1516 and 1520. They really mean no more than that he regarded Aristotle as the backbone of the old scholastic philosophy, based upon free will, which he was rejecting. In his later years, when, in conjunction with Melanchthon, he was endeavouring to build up a new scholasticism of his own, he found himself obliged to resort to the Stagirite as the supreme master of method, and acknowledged him to be "homo acutissimus" and a clever dialectician.

course, it disgusted and alienated the more cultured minds which were inclined to sympathise with his protest against corruption and abuses. "Common sense teaches me," wrote Erasmus, in the *Hyperaspistes*, "that a man whose delight is in indecent and ribald language, and who can never have enough of it, is no fitting champion of the Divine cause. His arrogance, to which we know no parallel, must be tinged with madness: and his buffoonery is surely at variance with the Apostolic spirit."

The censure conveyed in these grave and dignified words is amply merited. But there can be no question that the sense of a mission was strong in Luther. His sincerity, from first to last, seems open to no doubt. Equally indubitable, as it appears to me, is the ever-increasing moral and spiritual deterioration of his character after he had plunged into overt rebellion. It is the common history of revolutionary leaders. The liberty they profess to vindicate soon turns into licence. True liberty dwells only in servitude to law, which is a function of reason. When passion usurps the place of reason, the man who claims to be a law unto himself—and this is what Luther practically did—has an animal for his subject. Assuredly, animalism is largely written on Luther's life and teaching after the consummation of his revolt. In 1522 he made the discovery that the command "Increase and multiply" is of universal applica-

tion; that every individual man is bound to marry under an obligation as stringent as that which binds him not to commit murder or adultery. This is the chief theme of his famous sermon *De Matrimonio*, wherein is contained his practical teaching regarding the relations of the sexes; a teaching from which, as Mozley observes, "the natural conscience of a heathen and a savage would recoil." *

It is in Luther's personal character, I should here observe, that we find the true key to his most distinctive doctrines. His dogma of justification by faith alone is an expression of his rejection of asceticism and self-discipline. And that acute critic, Nisard, well observes, with regard to his doctrine of the servitude of the will, "Quel intérêt pouvait prendre au libre arbitre Luther, si souvent esclave de sa propre fougue, qu'il confondait avec la grâce?" Again, the indomitable self-confidence of the man comes out in the unhesitating fervour with which he anathematises every one whose private judgment differs from his own. "He who does not receive my doctrine is sure to be damned," he announced upon one occasion. Doubtless he believed it. He did not admit the possibility that any one could honestly arrive at any other interpretation than his of any passage of Holy Writ. The very novelty of his views intoxicated him. Sometimes, indeed, the intoxication wears off,

* Vol. i. p. 401.

and we find him a prey to that melancholy and despondency of which Janssen makes so much—too much, perhaps. Certain it is, however, as Mozley happily expresses it, that "while he drives the chariot of the Reformation with fury, *post equitem sedet atra cura*—he has a lingering gloom at heart." "Melancholy is the nurse of madness." And there are pages of his which it is difficult to suppose could have been written by any perfectly sane person. His hatred of Rome became a kind of obsession. On the subject of the Papacy—it is not too much to say—he is a monomaniac. To the end his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness against the Pope. The verse "Pestis eram vivus, moriens tua mors ero, Papa," is among his last recorded utterances.

VII.

Such was Martin Luther; and such were his qualifications for the work which he did—the consummation of the revolt against decadent Catholicism, latent in the Renaissance, and traceable from its beginnings. Of the greatness, the Titanic greatness of the man, there can be no question. The greatness of the Revolution wrought by him is manifest to all men. We may, with strict accuracy, ascribe to him the Protestant Reformation and all that came of it. The Continental Reformers, however much their private

judgments may have differed from his, were clearly his spiritual offspring. The Anglican Reformation differed from the Continental in this, that in its inception it was rather political than religious. Henry VIII. rebelled not against Catholic dogma, but against Papal supremacy. But after his death the direction of the ecclesiastical movement initiated by him passed into the hands of Cranmer, a disciple of Luther; and to Cranmer are due the changes in a Protestant sense made in the Communion and Ordination Offices of the Church of England. The doctrine to this day, distinctive of the many varieties of what we may call "orthodox" Protestantism, as opposed to its rationalistic developments, is Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. For Luther—as we have seen in an earlier page—faith meant the personal appropriation by the individual of the redeeming work of Christ; a fiduciary trust in Him; a laying hold of Him which effects an imputation of His righteousness. This is what he called "The Gospel." The term is still used in that sense in popular Protestantism, which accounts of "saving faith" precisely as he did. Now it is certain that this doctrine, however we may feel towards it, was Luther's own particular and original deduction from the Pauline Epistles. Not a trace of it is to be found in any theologian from the second to the sixteenth century.* It is

* Luther no doubt imagined that he had discovered some

as unknown to the earliest Fathers as to the latest Schoolmen. For them, one and all, faith means assent to propositions revealed by Christianity; belief in truths taught by the Catholic Church. So much is indubitable as mere matter of historical fact, apart from religious controversy, with which we are not now concerned. And it is sufficient to warrant us in regarding that "orthodox" or Evangelical Protestantism, which is still a considerable power in the world, as Luther's creation. Nor is it only in the distinctly religious domain that Luther's teaching has been so influential and so far-reaching. The French Revolutionists, like the Anabaptists before them, merely applied in the sphere of politics the principles which Luther had laid down in the sphere of theology. They are debtors to Luther for that doctrine of the sovereignty of the individual which is the very foundation of Rousseau's *Contrat Social* and of *The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*, formulated by Rousseau's disciples.

But more. It is beyond question—to speak *ex humano die*—that Luther's Revolution was the

warrant for this dogma in the writings of St. Augustine. But as Cardinal Newman has shown in his *Lectures on Justification* —published in 1838—the Lutheran teaching is quite irreconcilable with the Augustinian. "The opposite characteristics of the two systems of doctrine of which Luther and St. Austin are the respective expounders," have been drawn out by him, with singular conclusiveness, at pp. 58–60 (3rd. ed.) of this masterly work—"a little gem," Döllinger used to call it.

salvation of the Papal Church. A Catholic historian has called the Council of Trent the greatest thing effected by him. The Reformation wrought there was, indeed, too long delayed. In spite of Clement VII.'s repeated promises of a General Council, none was summoned during his disastrous Pontificate. At length the fears and forebodings of the Roman Curia were obliged to give way to the exigencies of the times, and the solemn sessions of the Tridentine Fathers began. It cannot be maintained that the august assembly was as œcumenical in its composition as in its claims. No candid historian will deny the vast gain to the Christian world from its labours. As little will he deny that the predominance of the Italian element in it obscured its representative character, narrowed its sympathies, and marred its reforming work. But Luther's Revolution served the cause of Catholicism in another way. It imposed upon Catholics the necessity of giving a rational account of the faith that was in them. It sent them back to a study of the sources of their doctrines, long buried under a mass of sophisms and superstitions. It quickened into new life both their theology and their philosophy. Nor is this all. In religion, as elsewhere, perpetual combat is the law and the condition of vitality. Nisard remarks: "Les croyances disputées sont les seules qui sont profondes, outre que les mêmes combats qui renouvellent les esprits renouvellent

les caractères." These words are true to the letter, and Germany offers an admirable illustration of them. The struggle for existence imposed there upon Catholicism by contiguous Protestantism has had the most salutary effect upon it. At the present time German Catholics form, so to speak, the backbone of the Roman Communion. They take a large share in, they exercise a wholesome influence on, not only the political but the mental and moral life of their country. In the domain of history—and especially of medieval history—they hold a unique place. Their theological faculties are really learned. Even in scientific Biblical criticism, so little cultivated, as a rule, by the spiritual subjects of the Pope, some of them have attained a well-earned reputation. In philosophy they have not only successfully defended the chief positions of the scholastics, but have solidly built thereon. It is a marvellous contrast to the intellectual decadence exhibited by Catholicism in countries where the Lutheran Revolution never entered, or where it was repressed by the fires of inquisitors and the swords of dragoons.

The great question remains: What has been the effect of Luther's work upon that "progress in the direction of organized and assured freedom" which I agree with Lord Acton in regarding as "the characteristic fact of modern history"; "the one ethical result that rests on the converging and

combined conditions of advancing civilization." * Of course, if we consider only its immediate fruits, the Lutheran Revolution can by no means be said to have advanced that progress. Nothing can be further removed from the truth than to regard Luther as a champion of liberty, a prophet of toleration, an apostle of freedom of conscience. His doctrine of the private interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures by each Christian, apparently proclaims the supremacy of the individual reason; but, on the other hand, his doctrine of grace and necessity destroys free will, suppresses moral responsibility, dethrones the individual reason, nay, practically effaces the individual. It makes of man a mere pipe to be played upon by Divine influences. But if that is the true account of man, his pretended sovereignty is the emptiest of titles. He is really as fast bound in fate as is irrational nature. Liberty does not exist for him in any true sense: for moral liberty is the only source and root of all liberty. The rights of the individual rest upon his duties. But duty implies free will, a will that can choose between motives. No free will, no duty, no rights. The principle of liberty of conscience has its root in the duty of every man to follow his conscience wherever it may lead him; to obey its dictates, even if it be a false conscience, in spite of the

* See his *Inaugural Lecture* as Professor of Modern History at Cambridge.

behests of any earthly power, and to suffer, if need be, unto death, rather than to go against it.

Luther by no means realized this. He sought to confine Protestantism to his own protest. The endeavour was absurd and futile. But there was nothing of the critic in Luther. His view of the Sacred Scriptures was absolutely unscientific, and has long been untenable save by children and old women of both sexes. He opposed to the *Ecclesia docens*, and to the Roman Church as its mouthpiece, the Bible as above criticism, homogeneous, self-explanatory, and final. And when he said "the Bible," he meant his own interpretation of the Bible. "He refuses," Cardinal Aleander wrote to the Pope, "all judgment except the words of the Sacred Scriptures, which he will have interpreted his own way; and laughs at any one who interprets them differently." Nay, in the fulness of his imperious dogmatism, he went further. As the Emperor Sigismund would be "super grammaticam," so would he be super Bibliam. He rejects the Epistle of St. James because it contradicts his doctrine of justification. He introduces the word "only" into his translation of a well-known verse of the Epistle to the Romans, in order to support that doctrine. And his answer to those who objected to these proceedings is, "Papist and Ass are all one: *sic volo, sic jubeo: stet pro ratione voluntas.*" But Protestants, as well as Papists, demurred to the conclusiveness

of this argument. I need not dwell upon the virulent controversies which arose, not only between the Lutheran and rival sects, but even in the Lutheran sect itself. Delivered from the control of ecclesiastical authority, every one with a turn for theological speculation claimed not only to abound in his own sense, or nonsense, but to impose his brand-new dogmas upon the rest of mankind. Nothing remained but to constitute the civil power the judge in controversies of faith. The civil power was only too delighted to accept the office, and to possess itself of ecclesiastical prerogatives, as it had possessed itself of ecclesiastical property. The prince took the place of the bishop, nay, of the Pope, as supreme arbiter of religious doctrine, and, bettering Luther's instruction, imposed his own *sic volo*, *sic jubeo*, as the standard of orthodoxy. Beard observes in his *Hibbert Lectures*, "We need not wonder that the toleration provided for by the Convention of Passau was the maimed and ineffectual form expressed in the maxim 'Cujus regio, ejus religio.'" We certainly may wonder that so clear-sighted a critic as Beard could regard the state of things expressed by that maxim as "toleration" at all. Its effect was to place the religion of the subject absolutely at the disposal of the ruler. And the history of Germany, at the period of which I am writing, teems with examples of the rigour wherewith this princely prerogative

was exercised. To give only one. The Rhenish Palatinate, Catholic until 1540, was forced to become Lutheran in that year, Lutheranism being the religion of the new Elector, Otto Henry. A quarter of a century afterwards his successor, Frederick, imposed Calvinism upon it, ejecting and exiling the Lutheran pastors, and remorselessly persecuting all who held by their teaching. On Frederick's death the country was forcibly reconverted to Lutheranism by the next Elector, who held that variety of Protestantism. In short, not to continue further the details of its theological career, in a century it passed through ten phases of religious belief. If any fact of history is certain, it is this: that Luther's so-called "evangelical freedom" was the absolute destruction of all freedom of conscience.

One immediate result, then, of the Lutheran Revolution was to rivet the spiritual slavery of the German people. Another was to fit them for that slavery by undermining such moral ideals as the indulgence-mongers had left among them. Hallam, in a well-known chapter, accuses Luther of Antinomianism, and declares that "his wild paradoxes menace the foundations of religion and morality." Archdeacon Hare's vindication of him from these charges is more passionate than persuasive. It is true that Luther himself was no Antinomian; nay, more, that he hated Antinomianism as bringing discredit upon his favourite

doctrine. Equally true is it that there are numerous passages in his writings—some of the most significant of them occur in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*—which inevitably tend to Antinomianism. Beard is constrained to confess, "If the tree is to be known by its fruits, the doctrine of justification by faith alone must be admitted to be peculiarly susceptible of moral perversion." As a matter of historical fact, it was so perverted. But further: liberty of volition—of course a limited and conditioned liberty—is the very cornerstone of any rational system of morals. "Voluntas est qua peccatur et qua bene vivitur," says St. Augustine in a pregnant dictum, which sums the matter up. To deny free will is to make an end of ethics. And, in truth, Luther's necessarianism and fatalism reduced the moral law to a mere regulation of police. There is much evidence to show that one immediate consequence of his Revolution was a frightful increase of wickedness and vice. Luther's own testimony to the fact is copious, and would be conclusive, if we could be quite sure that it is not vitiated by his habitual exaggeration. He does not hesitate to say that the last state of the regions which had received his teaching was worse than the first; and he owns that his doctrine of justification, as popularly apprehended, or misapprehended, was largely responsible for this result. As his life draws to

a close, so does his view of the moral effect of his work grow darker and darker. And here, no doubt, is one reason of the ever-increasing melancholy which characterizes his later years.

Again, the immediate influence of Lutheranism upon intellectual cultivation was such as to realize the worst fears of Erasmus. His testimony, "Ubicunque regnat Lutheranismus, ibi literarum est interitus," is unquestionably true. Yet it is also true that the great moral and intellectual regenerators of Germany — Kant and Schiller, Lessing and Goethe—may properly be considered an outcome of Luther. Of course the very primary postulate of Kant and Schiller's ethical doctrine is that liberty of the will which Luther rejected. And Lessing and Goethe were apostles of that liberal culture which Luther hindered and retarded.* Their work, and the work of the other great teachers of the *Aufklärung*, was the destruction of the Protestant scholasticism which Luther and his associates established upon the ruins of the decadent and outworn scholasticism of the Middle Ages, and which was no less hostile than it to human progress. But it is impossible to conceive of the *Aufklärung* as occurring in any but a Protestant country; to imagine a Catholic Kant, a Catholic Schiller, a Catholic Lessing, a Catholic

* As Goethe observes in his well-known lines:—

"Franzthum drägnt in diesen verworrenen Tagen wie ehmals Lutherthum es gethan, ruhige Bildung zurück."

Goethe. There is a secret logic which rules human destinies; and, in virtue of it, doctrines often produce consequences most alien from the intentions, nay, from the thoughts of their originators. Lessing has pointed to the true explanation of those ultimate results of Luther's Revolution at which Luther would have stood aghast. "Luther delivered," he says, "from the yoke of tradition." It is perfectly true, as he goes on to indicate, that Luther substituted for it the yoke of the letter: the yoke—to quote the words of Kant—of "the Biblical Theologian, [who] in order to humble the pride of the sciences, and to spare himself trouble with them, will venture upon assaults on astronomy or some other of them—geology for example—and try to arrest the forward endeavours of the human intellect: like those tribes who, lacking means or spirit to defend themselves against dreaded attacks, lay waste all around them." * But the principles in virtue of which Luther broke the yoke of indulgence-mongers are equally fatal—although Luther did not perceive it—to the yoke of Bibliolaters. And so we may, with Goethe, confess a debt to him in respect of that freedom from the fetters of spiritual narrowness—"von den Fesseln geistiger Borniertheit"—characteristic of this new age, which is of all liberties the most precious, which is the true foundation and the real safeguard of all.

* *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (Vorrede zur ersten Auflage).

CHAPTER VI.

MORE—THE SAINT.

I.

The first of the representative men of the Renaissance whom we have endeavoured to study in these pages was Michael Angelo, its most illustrious Type on the æsthetic side. In the present chapter I shall speak of one who belongs to a higher class than even that of the masters of the arts of design, among whom Buonarroti is supreme. Saints have been called—happily, as it seems to me—divine artists in the moral order; the order which transcends all others. In that blessed company Thomas More is rightly numbered. He represents the highest perfection of character discernible among the men of the Renaissance. A true child of his age, feeling deeply its new aspirations, assimilating its highest culture, rejoicing in its fuller life, his whole being is yet penetrated by truths which are not of an age but for all time; his whole existence is ruled, like Antigone's, by laws which

"are from everlasting, and no one knows their birthtide." An aureole of sanctity plays about his life and transfigures his death.

There are writers—Taine was a brilliant example of them—who make of history a mere department of physics, "eine reine Naturgeschichte," as the Germans would say; for whom the annals of the world are nothing more than a record of necessitated transformation and movement, and its sages, saints, and heroes mere puppets, "impotent pieces in the game" played by Natural Selection. There are others—Carlyle may serve as their spokesman—who tell us, "Universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is, at the bottom, the history of the great men who have worked here: all things which we see standing in this world are properly the outward material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of thoughts that dwelt in the great men sent into the world." Now the difference between these two schools has really its origin in the old controversy between Freewill and Determinism. The school of which I take Taine as a representative, is strictly necessarian; it holds that the political organism which we call a nation, developes according to laws as absolute and undeviating as those which govern the growth of a physical organism. The school to which Carlyle belonged, and which professes what Mr. Herbert Spencer derisively calls "The Great Man Theory," practi-

cally accounts of will as the only reality, and does not sufficiently realize that freedom of volition is limited and conditioned. "The Great Man Theory" is assuredly truer than the theory of Physical Determinism. It is true that great men are original forces; though it is also true that great men are, to some extent, made by their society. They are of their age. They would not be great men else. But they are not wholly fashioned by circumstances. On the contrary, their greatness largely lies in this, that they are not. They are conditioned doubtless by evolution, by heredity, by temperament, by environment. But they are something more than an aggregate of conditions. They are subject to the laws of time and matter; but not wholly subject. Their thoughts, their energy, their action, their suffering work wonders beyond time and matter, and the effects of mechanical force how subtle soever.

"Of mechanical force," I say. For there are forces not mechanical; forces not subject to the law of physical necessity. Such are, for example, duty and right. They are, properly speaking, ideas; and these ideas suffice to hinder action or to determine it. They are ideal forces. That is what we mean when we oppose right to might; to fact, justice. And so Kant well teaches that there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of necessity and the kingdom of liberty. In the realm of nature, necessity rules: every phenomenon is

determined by preceding phenomena: there is a rigorous mechanism in virtue of which the antecedent produces the consequent. In the kingdom of liberty, the rational will knows that its law is an ideal law—a law which cannot act physically or mechanically upon it, and which in determining its action, so to speak, metaphysically, leaves to it its own spontaneity. Now man belongs to both these kingdoms. And so does history, which is the record of man's action. History, like individual life, exhibits the play of both physical and ideal forces. And there is no common measure between the two.

I trust that my readers, when they have finished this chapter, will agree with me that considerations such as these are not out of place in beginning it.

II.

My task in writing of Erasmus was greatly facilitated by the large number of his letters which have come down to us. In them we have the man and his environment painted for us by himself, with supreme literary skill. Of More's letters comparatively few have been preserved. For some of the most important of them we are indebted to Erasmus, in whose correspondence they find place. On the other hand, we are fortunate in possessing an admirable account of

More from the pen of William Roper, who married his favourite daughter Margaret, and who lived in his home for sixteen years. It is a mere rough sketch: notes for a biography rather than a biography itself; and written, as it was, from memory, twenty years after More's death, it is occasionally inaccurate. But it is of incomparable value by reason of the simple piety and lucid candour impressed upon every line of it.* Stapleton, whose *Life of More* was written thirty years later, unquestionably had it before him in MS. —it was not published till 1626—and largely used it, gathering, however, information regarding his subject from many other trustworthy sources. His biography,† which was printed at Douai in 1588, is by far the fullest, as it is the earliest published of the ancient lives of More.‡ Of the modern, those by Sir James Mackintosh, Rudhart, Father Bridgett, and Mr. Hutton are the most important. Sir James Mackintosh's book, though the author

* It was republished with Notes and an Appendix of Letters by Mr. Singer in 1822.

† It forms part of the work called *Tres Thomæ;* the other two Thomases being St. Thomas the Apostle and St. Thomas à Becket.

‡ The other most notable of them are Harpsfield's, written in the reign of Queen Mary—it has never been printed—an anonymous life bearing date 1599, and printed by Dr. Wordsworth in his *Ecclesiastical Biography*, and Cressacre More's published in 1627. Cressacre More was Sir Thomas More's great-grandson. Rastell, More's son-in-law, also wrote a life of him, but no copy is known to exist.

has fallen into a few errors, is a kindly and generous tribute by an accomplished man of letters to a character whose sweetness and elevation took him captive. It was published in 1807. Rudhart's volume—*Thomas Morus aus den Quellen bearbeitet*—which appeared in 1829, is a monument of wide and accurate erudition, and of judicial impartiality. Of course, since it was written, a vast amount of original material, long buried in the archives of this and other countries, has been given to the world. Father Bridgett's chief reason for composing his work, as he explains, was that he might use this material unknown to former biographers; and no competent critic will deny that he used it admirably. He appears not to have left unexplored any source whence information about More might be derived. No one can rise from the perusal of the four hundred and fifty pages of his book without feeling his debtor for the clear and conscientious way in which his conclusions are presented, although, to say the truth, the debt would be greatly enhanced if his work had been crowned by an index. Sir Thomas More, as is natural, chiefly appealed to his sympathies as a witness, even unto death, for the authority of the Roman See. And his volume, published in 1891, is introduced congruously by the Decree of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, issued four years before, which authorized the cultus of the martyr and his fellow-sufferers under

Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. But Father Bridgett, while abounding in his own sense, always writes with calmness, candour, and courtesy; and although not declining theological controversy when the course of his narrative gives occasion for it, he never goes out of his way to seek it. Mr. Hutton, in his sympathetic and pleasing work, subordinates the discussion of critical questions of divinity and history to the personal interest of his subject. His aim is admirably indicated in the lines of Martial, so aptly quoted on his title-page—

> "Ars utinam mores animumque effingere possit:
> Pulchrior in terris nulla tabella foret."

He ingenuously confesses the fascination of his subject for him. "I certainly do not claim to be unbiassed; and I must admit that towards such a character as More I find it difficult even to be critical." Father Bridgett, it is interesting to note, has expressed himself in very similar words: "If I have been sparing in criticism, it is because the longer and more minutely I have studied those features, the more I have admired and loved them." It is not at all wonderful that the Catholic and the Anglican ecclesiastic should thus agree in devotion to a saintly character, with whose faith both have much in common. But we find it as strongly expressed by Nisard, for whom the religion which was the light of life to More has dwindled—as he patheti-

cally owns—to the shadow of a great name.* This brilliant and accomplished writer, towards the end of his admirable study, asks himself the question, "Has More been rightly judged in the preceding pages?" And he answers, "I know not; but sure I am that the tears, which have more than once moistened my pages as I wrote, were not shed for a fictitious person" (*un personnage falsifié*).

The fifty-seven years of More's earthly life extend from 1478 to 1535. The year of his birth is memorable in English history for the attainder of the Duke of Clarence by a Parliament "probably called for this express purpose," as Bishop Stubbs thinks, and exhibiting that complete subserviency of the Estates of the Realm to the royal will, through which, for a century, the ancient liberties of England suffered an eclipse. The new monarchy was then firmly established in the throne of Edward IV. The battle of Towton had broken for ever the power of the old nobility. The Church had largely lost its hold upon popular reverence, and sought to strengthen itself by an alliance with secular tyranny. The

* "Je regarde autour de moi, peut-être aussi en moi-même, et je ne vois guère que des consciences isolées n'ayant pour lutter contre toutes les tentations et tous les pièges de l'extrême civilisation que ce vague instinct du bien et du mal que Dieu a mis en nous. L'homme est placé entre des traditions plus qu'à demi rompues et un avenir inconnu." (*Renaissance et Réforme*, vol. i. p. 194.)

mercantile, trading, and labouring classes desired, above all things, a strong government, and the cessation of the civil strife which had desolated the country during the Wars of the Roses. If we would understand More's career aright, we must realize that he lived in a period when the constitutional freedom of the country was paralysed, though its forms still remained; when the authority of the monarch was, in fact, well-nigh absolute and unrestrained. Richard III., indeed, forced to bid for a popularity which might dim the memory of the sanguinary treason whereby he had obtained the throne, departed from the policy of his predecessor, and made professions of respect for what the citizens of London called, in a petition to him, "the liberty and laws of this realm, wherein every Englishman is inherited." But this faint gleam of redawning freedom died away when that man of blood was overtaken by righteous retribution at the battle of Bosworth. Henry VII. made it his lifelong task to continue and consolidate the policy of Edward IV. He observed, indeed, a respect for the forms of the Constitution which Edward had not thought necessary. But the history of his reign is the history of the continual aggrandizement of the power of the Crown. Forced loans and benevolences strike at the root of private property. Attainders, taking the place of trial by jury at the will of the Government, annihilate security of life

and personal freedom. The pleasure of the prince, recognized as the sufficient motive and defence of legislation, practically becomes law to his subjects. This process continues under Henry VIII. until, in 1535, it culminates in the Act of Supremacy —a measure which, as Professor Brewer writes, "separated Henry VIII. from all his predecessors by an immeasurable interval," which broke down the last limitations upon the royal prerogative, which made the King master of the consciences as of the lives and goods of his people.

Such were the political conditions in which Sir Thomas More's life was spent. It seems especially desirable thus briefly to recall them, as they have, of late years, been singularly misrepresented by a writer whose method in history I have felt it my duty to expose in previous pages; a writer whose great rhetorical gifts have been devoted to the construction of what the Roman satirist calls *pictæ tectoria linguæ*—masterpieces of style which, upon critical examination, prove mere literary stucco. Of the intellectual and spiritual characteristics of More's age, enough has been said in the foregoing chapters. But it is well to recall the truth that the renewed interest in the thought and lore of the antique world, the ever-growing decadence and discredit of moribund and effete scholasticism, the breaking away of art from the conventional medieval manner to fuller fountains of inspiration, the rise of modern tongues into

completer symmetry and ampler form, and all else that the Renaissance means, were the outward visible signs of a great change unconsciously wrought in man himself. That change affected different natures and temperaments differently. Erasmus, for example, felt and exhibited it in one way; More in another. Much as the two characters had in common, they were fundamentally diverse. The mind of Erasmus was, in the proper sense of the word, sceptical; the mind of More was essentially conservative. Erasmus was dominated by "a noble and solid curiosity"; More by an intelligent and pious reverence. And here probably is one explanation of the close and tender friendship which bound them to one another. Each might say of the other:—

> "he was rich where I was poor;
> And his unlikeness fitted mine."

Sir Thomas More's life seems to fall naturally into four divisions: the period of youth and early manhood, which may be taken to extend to 1509, when at the accession of Henry VIII. he, so to speak, came out of his shell; the period of his successful career in the profession of the law and growing literary fame, closed by his entrance into the royal service in 1518; the period of his public employment as a Minister of the Crown, which comes to an end with his resignation of the Great Seal in 1532; and the period of his disgrace and

persecution, crowned by his martyrdom in 1535. Let us briefly survey him in these four stages of his eventful life, and then attempt to estimate its value and significance.

III.

He was of gentle blood, the son of an accomplished lawyer, who rose to be one of the Judges of the King's Bench, and whose stern but not unkindly features are accurately preserved for us by a crayon drawing of Holbein, now in the Royal Collection at Windsor. His mother, as Stapleton relates, saw in a dream, engraven on her wedding ring, as in a series of cameos, the names and likenesses of her still unborn children, Thomas shining out with a brighter lustre than the rest. His father, at the time of his birth, lived in Milk Street, in the City of London, and the boy was sent to the neighbouring school of St. Anthony, in Threadneedle Street, of which Nicholas Holt, a scholar of some distinction, was the master, and where, shortly before, Colet and William Latimer had received the first rudiments of their education. Thence, according to a custom common at the time, he was transferred to the household of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, the distinguished statesman who had counselled to Henry VII. the policy which placed him on the

throne, and who was, for long years, the most trusted minister of that monarch. Erasmus tells us that, as a boy (*adolescens*), he "both wrote little comedies and acted in them." And it is related by Roper that the Cardinal, "delighting in his wit and towardness, would often say of him to the nobles that divers times dined with him, 'This child, here waiting at the table—whoever shall live to see it—will prove a marvellous man.'"

"Whereupon," adds Roper, "for his further advancement in learning, he placed him at Oxford." This was probably in the year 1492. More was then fourteen. According to his great-grandson, Cressacre More, he was entered at Canterbury Hall, a foundation which was merged by Wolsey in Christ Church, and whose site is still indicated by the Canterbury quadrangle of that College. Here he remained two years, and, as we read in Harpsfield, "wonderfully profited in the Latin and Greek tongues." It was at this time that he made the acquaintance of Grocyn—who, indeed, directed his Hellenic studies—of William Latimer, and of Colet. It is worth while to pause for a moment over some details of his life in Oxford. His father, Stapleton tells us, "wished that he should learn from his earliest years to be frugal and sober, and to love nothing but his studies and literature. For this reason he gave him the bare necessaries of life, and would not allow him a farthing to spend freely. This he

carried out so strictly that the young man had not money for the mending of his worn-out shoes without asking it from his father." "More's life at Oxford," writes Mr. Hutton, "could not have been an easy one. The accounts we have of the hardships of students in Edward VI.'s reign would probably be true of forty years earlier. Many rose between four and five, and after prayer in the College chapel studied till ten, when they dined on very meagre fare, content with a penny piece of beef between four, having a pottage made of the same beef with salt and oatmeal, and nothing else. After their dinner," continues the description, "they are reading or learning till five in the evening, when they have a supper not better than their dinner, immediately after which they go to reasoning in problems or some other study, till nine or ten; and then, being without fire, are forced to walk or run up and down for half an hour to get a heat in the feet, when they go to bed." * Such was the discipline by which More's spiritual and intellectual character was formed; a discipline as severe as that which trained the youth of antique Rome—"rusticorum mascula militum proles"—to be the conquerors of Pyrrhus and Antiochus and Hannibal. It was in another kind of combat that More was to contend, and to be crowned as victor. He himself, in after-life,

* P. 16. The description Mr. Hutton is quoting occurs in a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross in 1551, by T. Leaver.

recognized the value of this stern schooling. "It was thus," he would say, "that I indulged in no vice or pleasure, and spent my time in no vain or hurtful amusements. I did not know what luxury meant."

More remained at Oxford only two years. His father, who desired that the youth should follow the profession of the law, looked with no great favour upon his devotion to literature—so it appears from one of Erasmus's letters — and entered him in 1494 at New Inn. Two years later, as we learn from Roper, he "was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, with very small allowance, continuing there his studies, until he was made and accounted a worthy utter barrister." The date of his call to the Bar appears to have been 1500. It is evident that he must have devoted himself earnestly to the study of the law, and must have attained recognition for his proficiency in it; for, shortly after his call, the governing body of Lincoln's Inn appointed him reader at Furnivall's Inn—one of the Inns of Chancery dependent on them; "and there he lectured," Roper affirms, "three years and more." But while intent upon his professional studies, he did not neglect the pursuits which were really more congenial to him. He gave about this time nine lectures in the Church of St. Lawrence Jewry, of which Grocyn was then Rector, on St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*—lectures which were attended, his

biographers aver, by the most learned men in London. His reputation for scholarship was considerable. Nisard says, in his epigrammatic way, "At eighteen he was known to the *literati* of Europe; at eighteen he had already literary enemies. It was a more sure horoscope than his mother's dream. Enemies are the first to divine talent."

In 1498 began his acquaintance with Erasmus, then for the first time on a visit to England; an acquaintance soon to ripen into a tender and intimate friendship equally honourable and profitable to both. The next year we find Erasmus complaining of the non-arrival of "the most eagerly expected letters of my dear More" (*Mori mei*). And a year later he writes, "Did Nature ever frame a sweeter, happier character than More's?" It is curious, and significant of the difference between the two friends, that More was at this time seriously contemplating the surrendering of himself to that monastic life from which Erasmus—thrust into it without vocation—had shudderingly torn himself away, and which he ever afterwards regarded with supreme repugnance. "He lived for four years," says his great-grandson, Cressacre More, "amongst the Carthusians, dwelling near the Charterhouse, but without any vow. He had an earnest desire, also, to be a Franciscan friar, that he might serve God in a state of perfection. But finding that at that time religious

men in England had somewhat degenerated from their ancient strictness and fervour of spirit, he altered his mind. He had also after that, together with his faithful companion Lilly, a purpose to be a priest." The account which Erasmus gives of the matter is, "He applied his whole mind to exercises of piety, looking to and pondering on the priesthood, in vigils, fasts, and prayers, and similar austerities; in which thing he proved himself far more prudent than most candidates, who thrust themselves rashly into that arduous profession without a previous trial of their powers. The one thing which prevented him from giving himself to that kind of life was that he could not shake off the desire for the married state." * "God," Cressacre More piously observes, "had allotted him for another estate, not to live solitary, but that he might be a pattern to married men, how they should carefully bring up their children, how dearly they should love their wives, how they should employ their endeavours wholly for the good of their country, yet excellently perform the

* Mr. Hutton well remarks: "It is absurd to assert that 'More was disgusted with monastic corruption'; that he 'loathed monks as a disgrace to the Church.' He was throughout his life a warm friend of the religious orders, and a devoted admirer of the monastic ideal. He condemned the vices of individuals. . . . There is not the slightest sign that his decision to decline the monastic life was due, in the smallest degree, to a distrust of the system, or a distaste for the theology of the Church." (P. 28.)

virtues of religious men, as piety, charity, humility, and conjugal chastity." During this time of doubt and interior trial, More was largely guided by the counsel and advice of Colet, his confessor, who was then Rector of the country parish of Stepney. In a letter* full of beautiful and touching things, though not free from those rhetorical tropes in which scholars at that time were wont to indulge when writing in Latin, More expresses great delight at seeing Colet's servant, when walking up and down Westminster Hall; laments the loss of his friend's society and monitions and sermons; and anxiously desires his return. "Meanwhile," he continues, "I shall pass my time with Grocyn, Linacre, and our friend Lilly, the first of whom, as you know, is the only director of my life in your absence, the second the master of my studies, and the third my most dear companion."

Towards the end of 1505 Erasmus paid his second visit to England, and found More married and practising as a barrister. His wife was "the daughter of one Mr. Colt, a gentleman of Essex." His inclination appears to have been towards her younger sister, whom "he thought," Roper tells us, "the fairest and best favoured; yet when he considered that it would be both great grief and some shame to the eldest to see the younger sister preferred before her in marriage, he then, of a

* It will be found in Stapleton.

certain pity, framed his fancy to her and married her"—an instance of self-abnegation bordering surely on heroic charity, which apparently had its reward. "Suavissima illius conjux" is the description Erasmus gives of this first wife of More's; and he himself, in his epitaph composed long years afterwards, tenderly calls her his dear little wife ("uxorcula Mori"). After his marriage he went to reside in Bucklersbury, in the parish of St. Stephen, Walbrook, where * his four children were born. In 1504 he had become a member of Parliament, and in that capacity, towards the end of the reign of Henry VII., he incurred the displeasure of the King for opposing a subsidy of "three-fifteenths, for the marriage of his eldest daughter, that should be Scottish queen. And forsomuch," continues Roper, 'as he nothing having, nothing could lose, his Grace devised a causeless quarrel against his father, keeping him in the Tower till he had made him pay a hundred pounds fine." More thought it safer to withdraw from England to France for a season; and while there studied the French language, geometry, and music. In 1509 Henry VII. died, and More returned to England. He was then thirty-one years of age.

* It was there that Erasmus visited him in 1509, and wrote *The Praise of Folly*.

IV.

The accession of Henry VIII. was welcomed by a general outburst of jubilation. During the quarter of a century that Henry VII. bore rule, the land had rest; and no well-informed historian will deny to him many of the more solid qualities of kingship. But he did not possess the gifts which strike the popular imagination; and if as a shepherd of the people he gave them the blessing of peace, he was too intent upon the shearing of his sheep, and was not specially scrupulous as to the instruments he employed for that purpose. Henry VIII., on the other hand, was singularly fitted, by his personal and intellectual gifts, to win the hearts of men and to excite their highest expectations. He was extremely handsome—"Nature could do little more for him," wrote the Venetian ambassador—of truly kingly bearing, expert in all knightly exercises, generous, nay lavish, and full of princely affability (*humanitas*). He was highly educated, according to the standard of the times; a good Latin scholar, well versed in theology, the scholastic philosophy and the canon law, and no contemptible musician. Scholars of all European countries supposed that the golden age had dawned in England, and More was not wanting in his congratulations. Henry's accession was quickly followed by his nuptials with Katharine of Aragon, who, it may be noted, was married

not as a widow but as a maiden, clad in a long white robe and with her hair falling over her shoulders, as was then the custom at virginal espousals. More, in a *Carmen Gratulatorium*, celebrates both these joyful events with exuberant fervour. His dedication of the poem to the King ends with the words, "Vale, princeps illustrissime, et, qui nobis ac rarus regum titulus est, amantissime."

More's tribute to the King and Queen seems to have attracted no special notice at Court; but he rapidly achieved great and increasing success in his profession. He shortly became a Bencher of his Inn of Court; and in 1510, the date at which he published his *Life of Pico*, written some years earlier, he was made Under-Sheriff of London, an office which then involved the determination of civil causes of considerable importance. Soon his income from his private practice and the emoluments of his office reached £400 a year; a sum equal to about £5,000 in these days. But he was singularly exempt from the love of money, and extremely scrupulous as to the cases which he took up. The year after he was made Under-Sheriff his wife died, and in a few months he married Alice Middleton, a widow—"nec bella admodum, nec puella," was his description of her to Erasmus—whom he thought likely, and as the event proved with reason, to make an excellent manager of his household, and a good stepmother

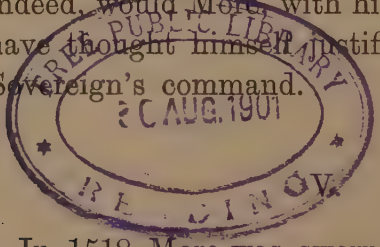
to his children. From 1514 to 1516 he was on embassy in Flanders, specially representing the London merchants, who had great confidence in him. It was there that he wrote the Second Book of his *Utopia;* the First or Introductory Book being written upon his return to England. His engrossing occupations left him little leisure for literary composition, as he tells us in this work. "I bestow my time about law matters: some to plead, some to hear; some as an arbitrator, with mine award to determine; some as an umpire or a judge, with my sentence finally to discuss." That was the staple business of his life. Then he goes on to say how domestic duties also craved attention from him, and how, for books, "I do win and get only that time which I steal from sleep and meat." The *Utopia* appeared at the end of the year 1516. It was printed at Louvain, and published by Froben; Budæus contributed a preface to it; Erasmus corrected the proofs. Later on I shall have to remark upon the real significance of the book. Here I may observe that its immediate success was not less than that achieved four years before by Erasmus's *Praise of Folly.* All educated men throughout Europe read and admired it. Felicitations and flattery poured in upon its author from every side. As for him, Nisard admirably observes: "Il sentait la plus vive et la plus noble de toutes les jouissances, celle de l'homme de lettres, honnête homme, quand il a

fait une œuvre raissonnable et appréciée. Ce furent des jours d'or et de soie, comme on disait dans son temps, dans cette vie dont la fin devait être si sombre. Il avait la gloire, cette ivresse qui devait être si douce à l'homme dont le cœur est pur, et à qui les lettres n'ont pas ôté sa candeur."

More writes to Erasmus that much as he would have liked to prolong his Utopian dreams, the dawn of day put them to flight and brought him back to the realities of his existence at the Bar. But in truth his professional life—the happiest period of his existence, if we judge *ex humano die*—was swiftly drawing to a close. In 1517 he was sent on embassy to Calais, much against his will. "Nothing can be more odious to me than this legation," he writes to Erasmus. . . . "If litigation even at home, where it brings gain, is so abhorrent to my nature, how tedious must it be here, where it brings only loss!" * It was at the suggestion of Wolsey, who was anxious to attach him to the royal service, that he had been selected for this mission. And now an event occurred which determined his career in the way desired by the Cardinal, but by no means desired by himself. A papal ship, obliged to put in at Southampton, had been claimed by the King's officials as a forfeiture. Campeggio, then Nuncio in England, demanded that the case should be judicially argued, and

* "Inter Epist. Erasm. dxl." This letter must have been written in 1517. It is misdated 1520 in the Leyden edition.

More was assigned to him for counsel. The matter was decided in the Pope's favour, and Henry, who was present at the hearing, was so struck by the ability with which More had conducted his case, that he desired to secure him for the public service. Wolsey, as Nisard puts it, "received an order to bring More to Court, *bon gré, mal gré*. The endeavour had once failed, foiled by More's love of retirement and a tranquil life. This time the Cardinal succeeded, and brought the victim to the feet of the King, who extended for his kiss the hand that was to sign his death-warrant." "I have come to Court," he writes to Bishop Fisher, "extremely against my will." But it was difficult for any subject to oppose his own volition to the King's in such a matter. Nor, indeed, would More, with his strong sense of duty, have thought himself justified in disobeying the Sovereign's command.



In 1518 More was sworn of the Privy Council, and was made Master of Requests, an office which brought him into constant intercourse with Henry. And here let me pause to put before my readers the leading traits of a portrait of him at this time of his life, traced by the master hand of Erasmus.

"He is not tall in stature, though he is not remarkably short. He is rather fair than pale, and a faint blush of pink

appears beneath the whiteness of his skin. His hair is dark brown or black. His eyes are greyish blue, with some spots—reckoned in England a sign of genius. His face is in harmony with his character: it expresses an amiable gladness, and even an inclination to smile; * it is framed rather for mirth than for gravity and dignity, though without any approach to folly or buffoonery. The right shoulder is a little higher than the other, especially when he walks. This is not a physical defect, but the result of habit. The only sign of rusticity is in his hands, which are slightly coarse. He has good health, although he is not robust. He seems to promise longevity. His father still survives, in a wonderfully vigorous old age. I never saw any one so indifferent about food. Until he had reached man's estate he was a water-drinker. That was natural to him. His voice is neither very strong nor very thin, but penetrating; not resounding nor soft, but that of a clear speaker. He has not naturally a gift for singing, although he delights in music of all kinds. He speaks with great clearness and perfect articulation, without rapidity or hesitation. He likes a simple dress, using neither silk, nor purple, nor gold chain, unless he is obliged. It is wonderful how careless he is of the ceremonious forms in which most men make politeness to consist. Formerly he was most averse from the frequentation of Courts, for he is a great hater of constraint and loves equality. Not without great trouble was he drawn into the Court of Henry VIII., although nothing more courteous and modest than this prince can be desired. He abhors games of tennis, dice, cards, and the like, by which most gentlemen kill time. Though he is rather too negligent of his own interests, no one is more diligent in those of his friends. In a word, if you want a model of perfect friendship, you will find it in no one

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* Nisard finely remarks that in the portrait painted by Holbein of More, after he had become Lord Chancellor, there is still the smile that Erasmus speaks of, but with something sad and suffering in it. "A la date du portrait qu'en faisait Érasme le sourire était une habitude de l'âme; quand Holbein le peignit, ce n'était guère qu'une habitude de la face."

better than in More. In society he is so polite, so sweet-mannered, that no one, of however melancholy a disposition, can fail to be cheered by him; and there is no misfortune that he does not alleviate. If he converses with the learned, he delights in their talent; with the ignorant and foolish, he enjoys their stupidity. With a wonderful dexterity he accommodates himself to every disposition. One of his great pleasures is to observe the forms, dispositions, and instincts of various animals. He keeps almost every kind of bird in his house. Without the least taint of superstition, he is earnest in his piety. He has his set hours for prayers; prayers which are no formality, but poured forth from his heart. He discourses with his friends of the life to come in such a way that one cannot fail to recognize how much his mind is in it, how good a hope he has of it." *

Such was More when he entered the royal service in 1518,† being then of the age of forty.

* Ep. CCCCXLVIII. I abridge Father Bridgett's version, making, however, here and there, a few unimportant changes which suggest themselves as I glance from it to the original text. The whole letter is an admirable specimen of Erasmus's happiest work, and will well repay perusal. Froude's abridged translation (*see* his *Erasmus*, p. 97) is everywhere loose, and is, in places, grotesquely wrong. He renders "Ad juvenilem usque ætatem aquæ potu delectatus est, id illi patrium fuit," "Like his father, he is a water-drinker"; "Nullum fere genus est alium quod domi non alat," is turned into "All the birds in Chelsea come to him to be fed"—which, by the way, had it been the case, would have been a remarkable instance of avine prescience, More being at that time still resident in Bucklersbury; while "Habet suas horas, quibus Deo litet precibus, non ex more sed e pectore depromptis," is supposed by Froude to mean, "He has his hours for prayer, but he uses no forms, and prays out of his heart!"

† He resigned his office of Under-Sheriff of London in 1519.

It is not my intention to follow him in detail through the fourteen years which he spent as a Minister of the Crown :—

> "Wearing the white flower of a blameless life
> In that fierce light which beats upon a throne."

The chief landmarks are his promotion to be Under-Treasurer in 1521, when he was knighted; his election as Speaker of the House of Commons, through royal influence and much against his will, in 1523; his advancement to the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, in 1525; his embassy to France in 1527, and to Cambray in 1529; and his attainment of the dignity of Lord Chancellor in the last-mentioned year, upon Wolsey's resignation of the Great Seal. At first the King's favour to him was unbounded. It possessed, Nisard quaintly says, "all the vivacity of an exclusive taste, and all the importunity of tyrannic power." More's wit and wisdom were infinitely grateful to the monarch and to the Queen also, who, like her husband, was educated much above the standard usual in those days. "He was often bidden to their supper and placed at the royal table, where he amused them by his *bon mots*, and by that conversation full of lively conceits (*saillies*) which interrupted so agreeably the conjugal *tête-à-tête* whereof the King began to weary." * More, on his side, did full justice to Henry's merits.

* Nisard, vol. i. p. 60.

Stapleton quotes a letter of his, written shortly after he was called to Court, in which he tells Bishop Fisher: "Such is the virtue and learning of the King, and his daily advancement in both, that the more I see him progress in these kingly ornaments, the less troublesome the courtier life becomes to me." More, however, had no taste for this courtier's life, and gradually he withdrew himself, as much as possible, from the royal companionship, to the house which he had bought at Chelsea, with its garden reaching down to the Thames. It was in 1523 that he took up his abode there; and there it was his delight to spend the scanty leisure he could procure from

> "the farce of state,
> The sober follies of the wise and great,"

with his family, his books, his animals—and before all things, with himself and the Great Taskmaster, in whose eye he ever lived.

The royal friendship followed him thither. He did not deceive himself as to its true value. Roper tells us that upon one occasion, "the King, unlooked for, came to dinner with him there, and after dinner, in a fair garden of his, walked with him by the space of an hour, holding his arm round his neck." The pleased son-in-law congratulated him upon the signal favour thus shown him by his Sovereign. To whom he replied, "Son Roper, I tell you I have no cause to be

proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France, it would not fail to go." More had rightly estimated the ruthless egotism—"self-will and self-worship," in Bishop Stubbs's happy phrase—which were hidden under Henry's gracious exterior, which were really the basis of his character, and which the course of events was so monstrously to develope.

It was in 1524 or 1525, probably, that the affair of the Divorce began to be mooted. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the tradition which represents the King's scruples concerning his marriage, as originally suggested to him by Wolsey.* Nor do I doubt that, whether real or not to the Minister, they soon assumed reality in Henry's mind. That they sprang up after sixteen years of cohabitation with the Queen, when her physical charms had faded, when indeed her person was an object of disgust rather than of attraction to him, is true. Equally true is it that they were reinforced by the violent passion which he had conceived for a young beauty, still in her teens. A violent over-mastering passion it undoubtedly was—the sort of passion which not unfrequently attacks a man in *l'âge critique*—as is sufficiently shown by his curious love-letters to Anne Boleyn, and by a vast amount of other evidence. And Anne, a most accomplished

* See an article entitled "Wolsey and the Divorce of of Henry VIII," in the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1877.

coquette, knew well how to inflame it to the utmost. Her sister's example was sufficient to warn her that its gratification would probably be followed by satiety. And her knowledge of Henry's scruples concerning the validity of his marriage with Katharine, led her to aspire to a crown, and to insist upon marriage as her price. But I cannot agree with Rudhart that in this passion we have the one true reason which moved the King to seek a divorce from his virtuous spouse; that the other reasons which he alleged, his doubt about the lawfulness of his marriage with his brother's widow, his desire of legitimate male issue for the establishment of the throne, were mere pretexts. Henry VIII. was not a man of pretexts. The truth is admirably indicated in the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of the Duke of Suffolk: the King's "conscience had crept too near another lady." Henry VIII. desired to appear to the world a highly conscientious monarch; and he began by exhibiting himself to himself in that capacity. He followed his conscience—to quote Archbishop Whately's *bon mot*—as a man follows the horse he drives.

Henry VIII. can hardly be regarded as abnormally dissolute for a king. There can be no doubt of his *amourettes* with several of the Queen's maids of honour—among them Elizabeth Blount, the mother of the Duke of Richmond. It is certain that Mary Boleyn, Anne's sister, was for some time his

mistress. And there is, to say the least, good ground for suspecting him of an intrigue with Lady Boleyn, their mother,* whence the rumour widely current and widely believed, at one time, that Anne was Henry's own child. But, in such matters, the judicious historian will not try sovereigns by too severe a standard. No doubt the moralist will maintain, and rightly, that the great laws and principles of sexual ethics apply equally to princes and to peasants. But it is observed by

* On this subject Mr. Pocock writes as follows:—"The King's intrigue with Mary Boleyn, the elder sister of Anne, can no longer be denied with any show of reason. Whether there was any connexion of a similar kind between Henry and the mother of Anne Boleyn, may, perhaps, still be somewhat doubtful. . . . That the report of such incest spread during the first year of the marriage is plain from the document numbered CCCXXIX. . . . Hitherto it had been supposed that Nicholas Sandar was the inventor of the libel; but this document shows that this report existed at least half a century before the book, *De Schismate*, was published." (*Records of the Reformation*, Pref. xxxviii.) We may observe that the "just, true, and lawful impediments" referred to in the 28th Henry VIII., c. 7—the Act declaring Anne Boleyn's marriage void—as "unknown" at the time of her nuptials, and confessed by her to Cranmer, probably with the hope of saving her life, have never been disclosed. They could not have been the alleged pre-contract of Anne with Henry Percy, for that, if it ever existed, would not have made the marriage null; nor could they, as Dr. Lingard supposed, have arisen from the King's intrigue with Mary Boleyn, for that was perfectly well known at the time of Anne's marriage, whence the clause inserted in the draft dispensation prepared in England by order of the King in 1527, in which the removal of the affinity so created was sought from the Pope.

Lord Byron, in a well-known verse, "All are not moralists." And the historian, if a moralist, as I for my part hold he is bound to be, should be also a man of the world. Henry VIII. was no model of conjugal fidelity. There are few monarchs for whom that distinction can be claimed. What distinguishes Henry from the rest of kings is his determination to conciliate the indulgence of his lust with the sanctity of marriage, and his success in his self-deception.* His desire to justify himself was the cause of the most flagitious actions of his life. He is the supreme example of what I may perhaps call, without offence—the phrase has become current coin—the Nonconformist conscience. Charles Lamb epigrammatically observed, "The Stuarts had mistresses; the Tudors kept wives." The dictum is as true as it is witty. Nor is it any paradox to say of Henry VIII., that he would have been a better man if he had been a worse.

No doubt it was impossible that in the matter of the Divorce More could sympathise with the

* It is observable that during the sweating sickness in 1528, when in the dread of death he betook himself vigorously to practices of piety, he blends devotion with desire in his love letters to Anne Boleyn. He represents himself to her as "praying God, an it be His good pleasure, to send us together again"; and then, after affectionate aspirations too warm for quotation here, he concludes, "No more to you at this time, mine own darling, but that a while I would we were together of an evening."

King. Assuredly, the sympathies of that just man must have been with the unhappy Katharine, threatened, after so many years of unquestioned and unblemished wedlock, with repudiation and ruin. But More was a trained and practised lawyer. And the King's case was, from a merely legal point of view, eminently arguable,* to say the least. It appears from a letter of More's to Cromwell, written in 1534, that Henry first mentioned the subject to him in September, 1527, telling him suddenly, as they were walking together in the Gallery at Hampton Court, "that the marriage was in such way contrary to Divine law, that it could nowise by the Church be dispensable." More's "sudden, unadvised answer" did not accord with the opinion expressed by the King, who therefore bade him confer on the matter with Dr. Fox, the royal almoner. "When the case came before the Legates, Sir Thomas More held himself entirely aloof, for the matter was in hand by an ordinary process of the spiritual law, whereof he could little skill. Besides, while the Legates were sitting, he was sent on an embassy to Cambray. On his return, the King again moved him to consider the matter." † This he did, the result being that "he could not bring his mind to the King's view." There were those—Cardinal

* For a lucid statement of the case, see Appendix V. to Sir William Nevill Geary's *Law of Marriage and Family Relations.*

† Bridgett, p. 226.

Pole among them—who regarded More's elevation to the woolsack, in 1529, as a bid for his support in the question of the divorce. They were probably right. Certain it is, that shortly after More received the Great Seal, a fresh attempt was made by Henry to win his suffrage. More, "after diligent conference with his Grace's counsellors," specially deputed to discuss the matter with him —they were Cranmer, Lee, Richard Fox, and Nicholas of Italy, all Doctors of Divinity and of the Canon Law—found himself unconvinced by their arguments. And so he told the King. At the same time, as we read in his letter to Cromwell, above mentioned, he recalled to the King's recollection the precept which the Sovereign had given him upon his first coming into the royal service: "that I should first look unto God, and after God to him." More's conclusion was, "I am not he which either can, or whom it would become, to take upon me the determination or decision of such a weighty matter, whereof divers points a great way pass my learning." He studiously and altogether put it aside, and devoted himself to the duties of his high office. But, as Nisard points out, "More's silence, far from lessening the responsibilities of Henry—which was what he, as a good Christian and faithful subject, wished—was more prejudicial to the King than an open opposition, because of the interpretation that the King put upon it." Henry VIII. is a stupen-

dous example of the vitiating effect of absolute authority, both upon him who exercises it and upon them over whom it is exercised. He had come to consider himself as a sort of vice-deity, and his subjects had come so to accept him. "Never," says Dr. Brewer, "had any king's will been so regarded as the voice of God and the unerring rule of duty." * "Henry," writes Bishop Stubbs, "could dictate to his Parliaments the measures he wished to pass, even down to the smallest details, and even make them petition for acts, when he was the only man in the kingdom who desired them." † Nay, "he forces against their will, evidently, but still effectively forces, Parliament and Convocation, Lords, Clergy, and Commons, to register simply the peremptory orders of the King as their own wishes." ‡ For him, virtue or vice in his subjects is merely compliance or non-compliance with his will. Take, for example, the case of Cranmer. Certain it is, if any historical fact is certain, that, whatever may be said in his favour, he was the most supple and most servile of Henry's sycophants. But, in the eyes of Henry, his suppleness and servility were his prime merits, earning for him from the royal lips the praise of honesty. For Henry, "honest" meant altogether compliant with the royal will.

* *Letters and State Papers*, &c., vol. ii. p. 358.

† *Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History*, p. 263.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

It is not necessary to follow here the course of events as the divorce proceedings dragged their slow length along, and Henry became more and more estranged from the Holy See, to which he had originally exhibited a devotion deemed by More excessive.* Unquestionably the tortuous policy of Clement was largely the cause of that estrangement. It was the right of the King that his matrimonial cause should be heard and determined upon its merits. And this honest course would probably have proved the most politic for the Pope—even if the decision should have gone against Henry. But as Father Bridgett, whose

* "Wherein," said More—*i.e.*, in the King's book against Luther—"when I found the Pope's authority highly advanced, and with strong arguments mightily defended, I said unto his Grace, 'I must put your Highness in remembrance of one thing, and that is this. The Pope, as your Grace knoweth, is a prince as you are, and in league with all other Christian princes; it may hereafter so fall out that your Grace and he may vary upon some points of the league, whereupon may grow breach of amity and war between you both. I think it best, therefore, that that place be amended, and his authority more slenderly touched.' 'Nay,' quoth his Grace, 'that shall it not; we are so much bounden unto the See of Rome that we cannot do too much honour unto it.' Then did I further put him in remembrance of the Statute of Premunire, whereby a good part of the Pope's pastoral care here was pared away. To that answered his Highness, 'Whatsoever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth the authority to the uttermost, for we received from that See our crown imperial'; which," adds More, with his irrepressible humour, "I never heard of before till his Grace told it me with his own mouth." (Roper's *Life*, p. 66.)

sympathies, naturally enough, were with Clement, is constrained to observe, "For nearly six years he dallied with the King and protracted the suit by every possible device that was not criminal. . . . He even encouraged hopes that he knew were fallacious. He appeared to entertain propositions that he knew were absurd, and allowed them to be discussed by theologians. The Pope was in hopes that by mild answers and delay he might weary out the King." * Clement little knew "the King's obstinacy and tenacity of purpose." † More knew them well. But even More did not divine "the depth of meanness to which he would sink and to which he would drag all around him." ‡ More, however, was too clear-sighted not to read aright the signs of the times in "a world not moving to his mind." His great concern was to satisfy his conscience where his duty lay in the conflict which he discerned to be inevitable. As he told the judges who sentenced him to death, "When I observed that public affairs were so ordered that the sources of the power of the Roman Pontiff would necessarily be examined, I gave myself up to a most diligent examination of that question for the space of seven years, and found that the authority of the Roman Pontiff is not only lawful, to be respected and necessary, but also grounded on the divine law and pre-

* *Life of Blessed John Fisher*, p. 158.

† Creighton, *Wolsey*, p. 215. ‡ *Ibid.*

scription." * And having arrived at this conclusion, More was not the man to play fast and loose with it. During the years of his Chancellorship, he eschewed politics as much as possible and confined himself to his judicial duties. But at last the Act against Annates gave him the signal that his occupation, as a Minister of the Crown, was gone. On the 16th of May, 1532, he delivered the Great Seal into the King's hands in the garden of York Place, near Westminster. An affection of the chest—*pectoris valetudo deterior*—supplied a sufficient reason for his resignation, which was accepted, most unwillingly, by Henry.

VI.

So closed the third period of More's career. I must not omit to notice how throughout it his whole life was dominated by his religion—a religion which, like that of his Utopians, was "grave, sharp, bitter, and rigorous," † yet "full

* Sandar, *De Schismate Anglicano*, book i. c. 16. I avail myself of Mr. David Lewis's translation.

† He was wont to say, Roper tells us, "We may not look at our pleasures, to go to heaven in feather beds; it is not the way; for our Lord Himself went thither in great pain, and by many tribulations . . . and the servant may not look to be in better case than his master." It is notable that in 1522, when he had just been knighted and made Under-Treasurer of the kingdom, he began his treatise—never finished—on "The Four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell." "In omnibus operibus tuis memorare novissima tua, et in æternum non peccabis."

of mercy and good fruits." He rose at two in the morning, was at prayer and study until seven, heard Mass daily, and daily after private prayers with his children said the Litany of the Saints and the Seven Penitential Psalms. It was also his custom "nightly before he went to bed, with his wife, children, and household, to go to his chapel, and there on his knees ordinarily to say certain psalms and collects with them." He spent much time in his oratory in devotion, using this employment the whole of Friday. He went to confession and communion before undertaking any business of importance. He wore a hair shirt by way of penance, and constantly scourged himself. He would also make pilgrimages to holy places, sometimes seven miles from his house, and always on foot. His alms-deeds were so abundant that he was known as "the public patron of the poor." So fully did he fulfil the precept not to lay up treasure on earth, that after his resignation of the Chancellorship, says Harpsfield, "he was not able, for the maintenance of himself and such as necessarily belonged to him, sufficiently to find meat, drink, fuel, apparel, and such other necessary things; but was enforced and compelled, for lack of other fuel every night before he went to bed, to cause a great bundle of ferns to be brought into his own chamber, and with the blaze thereof to warm himself, his wife, and his children; and so without any other fire to go to

bed." His absolute resignation to that Perfect Will which, as he undoubtingly believed, "ordereth a good man's going," is shown over and over again; and notably in that exquisitely beautiful letter to his wife, written in 1529, after the destruction of his barns and all that was therein: "Peradventure we have more cause to thank Him for our loss than for our winning, for His wisdom better seeth what is good for us than ourselves." * The beauty of his domestic life fascinated his contemporaries, and has fascinated every generation since. His house was the very sanctuary of "pure religion, breathing household laws." And how touching is that trait of antique piety related by Roper: "Whensoever he passed through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery, by the Court of the King's Bench, if his father, one of the judges thereof, had been sat or he came, he would go into the said Court, and there reverently kneeling down, in the sight of them all, duly ask his father's blessing." It is curious and significant that one of the first things to which he applied himself upon his retirement from the royal service, was the composition of his epitaph: a record of his life most touching in its plain simplicity, which may still be read on the tomb in Chelsea Church where his headless body lies. † We are told in it

* *English Works*, p. 1419.

† According to Weever and other authorities, whom the learned Jesuit, Father J. Morris, follows in his article in *The Month*, February, 1891.

that he had ever been desirous to spend his closing years in the peace of private life and freedom from public cares. It was otherwise ordered for him. Not peace and freedom, but persecution and fetters awaited him in the short space of his allotted time that still remained, until the axe of the executioner wrought his final deliverance.

Just a year after More's resignation of the Great Seal, Cranmer, who had meanwhile been consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury, held a Court at Kimbolton for the determination of the King's matrimonial cause. It is not easy to imagine anything more discreditable than the figure presented by him as a judge. The Queen, fulfilling his ardent hopes,* disdained to appear before his tribunal; and he proceeded with the utmost possible celerity to give sentence in favour of Henry. This was on the 23rd of May, 1533. Five days afterwards he judicially affirmed the legality of the King's marriage, celebrated some months before, with Anne Boleyn; and on the 29th of June she was crowned at Westminster. More was pressed by certain bishops—unquestionably at the royal instigation—to be present at the ceremony; but he refused. There can be little

* His letter to Cromwell, written in the fear that the Queen would embarrass and delay him by putting in an appearance, is assuredly one of the most disgraceful documents ever penned. It will be found in vol. vi. of the *Letters and State Papers* of Henry VIII.; also in Jenkyn's *Cranmer*, vol. i. p. 27.

doubt that, from that day, Anne Boleyn sought to compass his destruction.

Events now moved quickly. On the 11th of July, 1533, Clement VII. annulled the proceedings of Cranmer in the King's matrimonial cause. And on the 23rd of March, 1534—six months before his death—he gave definitive sentence * against the

* The sentence is given by Sandar, *De Schismate Anglicano*, book i. c. 14. It is as follows (I avail myself of Mr. David Lewis's translation) :—

"Clement Pope VII.—Whereas the validity of the marriage contracted by Our most dearly beloved children in Christ, Catherine and Henry VIII., King and Queen of England, has been disputed, and the cause brought before Us, and by Us, in a consistory of the most reverend Cardinals, committed to Our beloved son, Paul Capisucchi, auditor of causes in the Sacred Apostolic Palace, and dean ; and whereas the aforesaid Henry, while the cause was still pending, hath put away the said Catherine, and *de facto* married one Anne, contrary to Our commandments, and in contempt of Our prohibitions contained in Our letter *in forma Brevis*, and set forth after counsel had with Our brethren the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, thereby temerariously disturbing the due course of law ;—

"We, therefore, in the fulness of that power given Us, unworthy as We are, in the person of the blessed Peter, by Christ the King of kings, sitting on the throne of justice, and looking unto God alone, do, by this Our sentence, which We pronounce, by Our duty constrained, and with the advice of Our venerable brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, in consistory assembled, declare that the casting out of the said Catherine the queen, and the withholding of her wifely rights and royal dignity, whereof she stood possessed when the suit was begun, and also the marriage contracted by the aforesaid Henry and Anne—all manifest and notorious deeds—to be what they are and were, null and unjust and contrary to law, to have been

King, affirming the validity of Henry's marriage with Katharine, and requiring him, under pain of the greater excommunication, to reinstate her in

and to be tainted with the defects of nullity, injustice, and contempt of law; and We further declare by the same sentence that the children, born or to be born of that marriage, are and always have been bastards: We also declare that the said Catherine the queen is to be restored to, and reinstated in, her former rank and quasi-possession of her wifely rights and royal dignity, and that the King aforesaid must put away and remove the aforesaid Anne from his house and quasi-possession of wifely and royal rights, and by this sentence in writing We restore and reinstate, put away and remove, the aforesaid persons respectively.

"Moreover, by this same sentence, after due deliberation had, in virtue of Our office, We pronounce the aforesaid Henry to have fallen, to his own damnation, under the censure of the greater excommunication, and to have brought upon himself the other censures and penalties in the aforesaid Brief expressed, because of his disobedience thereto, and contempt thereof, and We command all the faithful to avoid him.

"Nevertheless, as a father tender of heart, We wish to deal gently and mercifully with the said Henry, and so We suspend the effects of this sentence from this day to the end of September next, that he may the more easily obey Our sentence and decrees aforementioned.

"And if within that time he shall not have submitted himself, and shall not have reinstated the said Catherine in her former rank, in which she was when the lawsuit began, and if he shall not have put the aforesaid Anne from his house and her quasi-possession of the rights of wife and queen, and if he shall not have effectually purged his contempt, then We will and decree that this present sentence shall take effect now as then.—So we say."

Few will deny that this grave and dignified document is worthy of the august pretensions of the tribunal whence it emanated. But it came four years too late.

her former rank, and to put away Anne. The King, who of course had expected this sentence, had answered it, in advance, by the Act of Succession, which received the royal assent on the 30th of March, 1534,* and which supplied the occasion desired for proceeding against More. An endeavour had been made two months before to implicate him in the affair of the Holy Maid of Kent. There was no shadow of reason for believing him to have in the least countenanced that strange visionary's political utterances, as the King well knew. Still, his name was included in the Bill of Attainder brought into the House of Lords on the 21st of February, 1533, against the nun and certain of her alleged supporters; the King, Roper writes, "presupposing of likelihood that the Bill would be to Sir Thomas More so troublous, that it would force him to relent and condescend to his request [to approve the divorce] —wherein his Grace was much deceived." More petitioned to be heard by the Peers; and in an entry in the Lords Journal, under date the 6th of March, when the Bill was read a third time, it is stated that "their Lordships thought fit to find whether it is according to the King's will that Sir Thomas More and the others named with him in the said Bill should be required to appear before their Lordships in the Star Chamber, that it may

* The Pontifical sentence did not reach England until after that date.

be heard what they can say for themselves." This was by no means according to Henry's will. "The King, not liking the proposal," Roper writes, "assigned that he should appear before four members of the Council: Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Audley, the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk, and Thomas Cromwell." They first thought, by friendly sounding importunities, to bring him to compliance with the King's desire. "But when they saw they could by no manner of persuasion remove him from his former determination, then began they more terribly to touch him" by menaces. "My Lords," he replied, "these terrors be arguments for children, not for me." Then, "displeasedly departed they." The King, much in wrath, was with difficulty brought to consent that More's name should be struck out of the Bill of Attainder. Tidings that this had been done were brought to him by his favourite daughter, Margaret. He replied: "Meg, *quod differtur non aufertur*." He knew well that the monarch who, as he had said years before, would not hesitate to take his life, in order to win a castle in France, would still less hesitate to take it in order to gratify the woman for whom, to quote the words of Dr. Brewer, "he had braved the good opinion of Christendom." The Duke of Norfolk made a last effort to turn him from the strait path at the end of which, they both well knew, was the scaffold. "As they chanced to

fall in familiar talk together, the Duke said unto him, 'By the Mass, Mr. More, it is perilous striving with princes; therefore I would wish you somewhat to incline to the King's pleasure: for, by God's Body, Mr. More, *indignatio principis mors est.*' 'Is that all, my Lord?' quoth he; 'then, in good faith, between your Grace and me there is but this—that I shall die to-day, and you to-morrow.'"

The Act of Succession provided that all subjects should be obliged, under pain of perpetual imprisonment, to take corporal oath "to observe and maintain the whole effect and contents" of that statute. No special form of oath was prescribed in it. We do not know for certain the precise wording of the form that was drawn up. But we do know that, going beyond the scope of the Act, which was to vest the succession to the Crown in the offspring of Henry by Anne Boleyn, it included a recognition of the truth of the preamble, which affirmed the invalidity of the King's first marriage and the validity of his second. This involved the rejection of the authority of the Roman Pontiff as the supreme spiritual judge of Christendom, and the repudiation of the sentence, in a directly opposite sense, which he had just pronounced. Hence Roper calls the oath "the oath of supremacy"; which it, in effect, was. On Low Sunday, 1534, which fell on April 12, More went to St. Paul's to hear the sermon. His presence

there was observed by a royal official, who, following him when he left the church, served him with a citation to appear on the morrow at Lambeth, and there to take the oath before the Commissioners appointed to administer it. The next day, early, More went "to Church to be confessed, hear Mass, and to be houselled, as his accustomed manner was always ere he entered into any matter of importance." He knew well what lay before him. "And whereas," continues Roper, "he evermore used before, at his departure from his wife and children whom he tenderly loved, to have them bring him to his boat, and there to kiss them and bid them all farewell, *then* would he suffer none of them forth the gate to follow him, but pulled the wicket after him, and shut them all from him: and with a heavy heart, as by his countenance it appeared, with me and our four servants took boat towards Lambeth. Wherein sitting still sadly awhile, at last he suddenly rounded me in the ear, and said, 'Son Roper, I thank our Lord the field is won.' What he meant thereby, I then wist not; yet, loth to seem ignorant, I answered him, 'I am therefore very glad.' But, as I conjectured afterwards, it was for that the love he had to God wrought in him so effectually that it conquered all his carnal affections utterly."

The Commissioners before whom More appeared were Cranmer, Audley, Cromwell, and the Abbot

of Westminster. He asked to see the Oath and the Act of Succession. "After which read secretly by myself," he told his daughter Margaret, "and the Oath considered with the Act, I answered unto them that my purpose was not to put any fault either in the Act or anyone that made it, or in the Oath or any men that swore it, nor to condemn the conscience of any other man; but as for myself, in good faith, my conscience so moved me in the matter, that though I could not deny to swear to the succession, yet unto *that* Oath, that was there offered me, I could not swear, without the jeopardising of my soul to perpetual damnation." * The Commissioners endeavoured, in vain, to shake his resolution, and he was committed to the custody of the Abbot of Westminster. It is to the credit of Cranmer, who could have had no sort of sympathy with More's scruples, that he made an effort—a curiously characteristic effort—to save him. He wrote to Cromwell suggesting that More and Fisher might "be sworn to the Act of Succession, but not to the preamble of the same," the exact nature of the oath taken by them being, however, suppressed, "except when and where His Highness might take some commodity" by disclosing it. It would, the Archbishop thought, "be a good quietation to many others within this realm,

* More may have had in his mind the dictum, "Quidquid fit contra conscientiam ædificat ad gehennam."

if such men should say that the succession comprised within the said Act, is good and according to God's laws." But Henry rejected this Cranmerian device, "Queen Anne by her importunate clamour did so exasperate the King against More," Roper writes. And no wonder. More was a living protest against her marriage, a perpetual witness to the King, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." And assuredly she longed for his head as keenly as Herodias longed for the head of St. John Baptist. After abiding in the custody of the Abbot of Westminster for four days, More was sent to the Tower to undergo the perpetual imprisonment which was the penalty for refusing the oath.

More was confined in the Tower for more than a year, enduring the ever-increasing rigour of his captivity with a cheerfulness which manifested itself constantly in many a merry saying: as when, for example, upon Sir Edward Walsingham, the Lieutenant of the fortress, apologizing for the poorness of his cheer, he replied, "Mr. Lieutenant, assure yourself I do not mislike my cheer; but whensoever I do, then thrust me out of your doors." During the greater part of the time, books, pen, ink and paper were allowed him; and he composed religious works both in Latin and English, some of which—the *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* may be specially instanced—are masterpieces, rich in devotional feeling, in

genuine eloquence, and in brilliant wit. Various efforts were made to shake his resolution. "The King's plan," Nisard observes, "was, at first, to ensnare him through his tenderest affections, to array against him the regrets, reproaches, tears of his family, the remembrance of his lost liberty, rendered so poignant by the presence of those among whom he had lived a free man." The King's plan was of no effect against his sense of duty. The lamentations of his wife, urging him to "do as all the bishops and best learned of this realm have done," the arguments of his favourite daughter, turned casuist by her affection for him, were as powerless as the face of the insistent tyrant to move him from his firm resolve. Margaret Roper told him, upon one occasion, how Cromwell had hinted that Parliament was not yet dissolved, and might decree worse things against him. More answered that he had thought of this. However, no man could do him hurt without doing him wrong; and he trusted God would not suffer so good and wise a prince as Henry thus to requite the long services of his true, faithful servant. "Yet, since nothing is impossible," he went on, "I forgot not in this matter the counsel of Christ in the Gospel, that ere I should begin to build this castle for the safeguard of mine own soul, I should sit and reckon what the charge would be. I counted, Margaret, full surely many a restless, weary night while my wife slept, and thought I

slept too, what peril were possible to fall to me; and in devising I had a full heavy heart. But yet, I thank our God, for all that, I never thought to change, though the very uttermost should happen to me that my fear ran upon." More was acutely sensitive; he had an almost womanly dread of corporal suffering, although, by the austerities which he practised throughout his life, he endeavoured to discipline himself to "endure hardness as a good soldier." In one of his last letters to Margaret Roper—"written with a coal, other pen have I none"—he tells her, "Albeit I am of nature so shrinking from pain, that I am almost afraid of a fillip, yet, in all the agonies that I have had, I thank the mighty mercy of God, I never in my mind intended to consent to do anything against my conscience." *

More was slowly dying during these months of his imprisonment in the Tower. Since he came

* It should be noted that there were more reasons than one why More could not in conscience take the oath. In a letter to Dr. Nicolas Wilson, written early in 1535, he says, "As touching the oath and the causes for which I refused it, no man knoweth what they be. For they be secret to my own conscience: some other, peradventure, than those that other men would ween; and such as I never disclosed to any man yet; no, nor ever intend to do while I live." We cannot penetrate the veil which More has drawn over this matter. But the most probable conjecture is that of Harpsfield, that More knew of an intrigue between the King and Lady Boleyn, whereby, according to the canon law, Henry had contracted affinity in the first degree with Anne.

there, he writes, he had looked once or twice to have given up the ghost; and as the rigour of his imprisonment increased, it became evident that his strength could not much longer hold out. But it did not suit the policy of the Court that he should die a natural death. And the Act of Supremacy passed on the 3rd of February, 1535, supplied a convenient instrument for bringing him to the scaffold. This statute, the complement and the crown of the anti-papal legislation of the preceding five years, during which Henry's breach with the See of Rome became wider and wider, as the prospect of its sanction for his marriage with Anne grew dimmer and dimmer, was the definitive establishment, in the words of Mr. Gardiner, of "a totally new order in the Church." * It enacted that the King "shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England," and shall exercise the prerogatives pertaining to that title. It invested Henry—to quote Dr. Brewer—with "a spiritual supremacy, an ecclesiastical headship [which] was without precedent and at variance with all tradition." † And to gainsay it was high treason.

* Pref. to vol. viii. of *Letters and State Papers*, p. i.

† Pref. to vol. i. of *Letters and State Papers*, p. cvii. "Henry," says Bishop Stubbs, "wished to be, with regard to the Church of England, the Pope, the whole Pope, and something more than Pope." (*Lectures on Medieval and Modern History*, p. 262.) "He evolved a regal papacy out of the royal supremacy." (*Ibid.*, p. 259.)

It could not be doubted what would be More's view of this statute; and certain of the royal Council, Cromwell among them, were directed to proceed to the Tower, in order to elicit it. More, whose instinct as a lawyer was ever strong, declined to betray himself, and would express no opinion of the Act. "I would not declare what fault I found in that statute, nor speak thereof," he told his daughter Margaret. "I could not further go, whatsoever pain should come thereof. 'I am,' quoth I, 'the King's true faithful servant and daily bedesman, and pray for his Highness and all his, and all the realm. I do nobody no harm. I say none harm, but wish everybody good. And if this be not good enough to keep a man alive, I long not to live. And I am dying already; and have, since I came here, been divers times in the case that I thought to die within one hour. And I thank our Lord that I was never sorry for it, but rather sorry when I saw the pang passed. And therefore my poor body is at the King's pleasure. Would God my death might do him good!'"

It was on the 30th of April that More's examination before Cromwell and his colleagues took place. On the 4th of May, Margaret Roper was allowed to see her father once more *

* It is worth noting that whenever Margaret Roper went to see her father in the Tower, their interviews began with the recitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints.

before his condemnation. While they were together, Roper relates, "As Sir Thomas More was looking out of his window, he chanced to behold one Master Reynolds, a religious, learned, and virtuous father of Sion, and three monks of the Charterhouse, for the matter of the Supremacy and Matrimony going out of the Tower to execution. He, as one longing in that journey to have accompanied them, said unto my wife, then standing there beside him, 'Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerful going to their deaths, as bridegroom to the marriage?'" His longing was soon to be gratified. On the 3rd of June he was again interrogated by certain of the Council regarding his opinion of the Act of Supremacy; but they were baffled by him as their fellows had been. On the 12th of June, Rich, the Solicitor-General, was sent to him in order, if possible, to entangle him in his talk; and it was chiefly upon the strength of what this caitiff affirmed to have fallen from him in conversation, that he was indicted for "refusing to the King maliciously, falsely, and traitorously his title of Supreme Head of the Church of England." The trial took place on July 1st, and Cardinal Pole, in a passage in his *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, marked by pathos and eloquence seldom found in his writings, has pictured the venerable magistrate, led out as a criminal from prison, in sordid dress, and grown

old, not by lapse of years but by the squalor and sufferings of his dungeon, his head made white by long confinement, his weak and broken body leaning on a staff, and, even so, scarcely able to stand, and dragged along the way that led to the place of trial, or rather of certain condemnation. * More, in his defence, alleged—and we may be sure with entire truth—that he had been guiltless of the denial of the supremacy alleged against him; that he had not discovered what was in his conscience concerning the statute to any man living. A verdict of guilty was, of course, easily obtained.† "Murder, preceded by mummery," is Lord Macaulay's accurate account of a State trial

* I avail myself of Father Bridgett's translation (p. 415). Cardinal Pole adds: "I, who loved and venerated him, writing now about his death, feel the tears gush to my eyes against my will, so that—as God is my witness—they hinder my writing, and blot the words that I have written."

† Froude, in the apology for More's judicial murder put forth in his *Divorce of Catherine of Aragon*, may be said to outdo himself. Regarding it as "an inevitable and painful incident in an infinitely blessed revolution," he justifies it by an argument which may be resolved into the following chain of reasoning:—

I. Bishop Fisher, as is evident from Chapuys' correspondence, wished the Emperor to take active measures against Henry's tyranny.

II. Henry may have known of Fisher's messages to Chapuys, and so may More, Fisher's intimate friend and companion, although there is no evidence whatever to support either of these conjectures.

III. Therefore More was rightly condemned to death.

at that period. The sentence of hanging, drawing, and quartering was commuted by the King into one of simple beheading on Tower Hill. Early on the 6th of July "came to him Sir Thomas Pope, his singular good friend, on message from the King and his council, that he should, before nine o'clock of the same morning, suffer death. 'Master Pope,' quoth Sir Thomas More, 'I heartily thank you. I have been always much bounden to the King's Highness for the benefits and honours that he hath still, from time to time, most bountifully heaped upon me. . . . And so help me God, most of all, Master Pope, am I bounden to His Highness that it pleaseth him so shortly to rid me out of the miseries of this wretched world; and therefore I will not fail earnestly to pray for his Grace, both here and also in the world to come.'"* Sir Thomas Pope was moved to tears. More bade him be of good comfort in the prospect of a happy meeting beyond the grave. "Who knows," asked Plato, "whether it is not life that is death and death that is life?" More knew.

I need not linger over the closing scene on that bright July morning on Tower Hill. Roper and

* The day before his execution he wrote to his daughter Margaret: "I would be very sorry if it should be any longer than to-morrow; for it is St. Thomas's even and the utas (octave) of St. Peter; and therefore to-morrow long I to go to God: it were a day very meet and convenient for me.'

the old biographers have told it with an antique simplicity more eloquent than any tropes. Froude has related it in a passage, doubtless familiar to all my readers, which is among the very best specimens of modern English prose. I may, however, note the curious and significant fact that the day of More's death was, apparently, the day on which the disgrace of the woman who had been chiefly instrumental in it began. Henry was playing at draughts with Anne Boleyn in the palace at Richmond when the tidings came that More had ceased to live. He cast on her an angry look, and saying, "It is your fault, if that man is dead," left her brusquely, and shut himself up in his closet for the rest of the day. More had foreseen the approaching doom of the unhappy woman, and had been sorry for her. On one occasion, Roper tells us, when Margaret visited her father in the Tower, "he asked her how Queen Anne did. 'In faith, father,' quoth she, 'never better.' 'Never better, Meg!' quoth he; 'alas, Meg, alas, it pitieth me to remember into what misery, poor soul, she shall shortly come.'"

VII.

So much must suffice to depict in the faintest outline, and as if by a few strokes of a pencil, the life of this memorable man. I must refer the

reader who desires ampler details of it to the volumes enumerated at the beginning of this chapter. I would urge him to the study of More's English works if they were more accessible.* Every competent judge, from the day they were written to our own, has recognized their great literary value. Tunstal, Bishop of London, writing in 1527, speaks of him as "able to emulate Demosthenes in our English tongue." "More lived," says Mr. Hutton, "at a turning-point in English literature, and he did much to guide the flowing stream into the channel it has since pursued. English literature became with him romantic, keenly alive to the sentiment of the past, imaginative, practical and pure. The characteristics of the great age of Elizabeth are seen, not dimly, in the master touches of his work." His ascetic writings possess a singular charm from the spirit of Christian mirth which ever animated him, and which breathes through them; a spirit which led him to play with the vain world and all that

* They were printed in London "in the yere of our Lord God 1557, at the coste and charges of John Cawood, John Waly, and Richard Tottell." Perhaps not more than a dozen copies are to be found in this country. It is certainly high time that they were reprinted. A collection of his writings in Latin appeared some thirty years later: "Thomæ Mori Angliæ quondam Cancellarii Opera Omnia. Francofurti ad Mœnum et Lipsiæ, MDCLXXXIX." A complete edition of the works of Sir Thomas More, both English and Latin, is surely an undertaking which might fitly be carried out by the press of either of our great Universities.

therein is, because he viewed it in the light of eternity. Even in his controversial treatises, dealing, in the vituperative tone * characteristic of the age, with disputes which are not for us the burning questions that they were for his generation, "passages of genuine eloquence and deep solemnity are not wanting." His *History of Richard III.* is a mere fragment, but, inspired as it doubtless was by Cardinal Morton, it is of the highest historical value; while its style is justly commended by Rudhart as "dignified, striking, and, for those times, singularly cultivated." † No one, indeed, can help being impressed by its vigour and lucidity, its incisiveness and picturesqueness, its sustained interest and dramatic power.

The book by which More is chiefly known is, of course, his *Utopia*. Written originally in Latin,‡ it was addressed, like Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, not to the English vulgar, but to the educated public of Europe; and it is of the highest interest, as being, in some sort, a revelation of More's mind

* Much to the delight of his great-grandson, Cressacre More, who writes: "To see how he handleth Luther would do any man good." Mr. Hutton observes regarding these controversial treatises of More's, "The strength of More's books lay in the popular ground they took up; they were almost the only works which attempted to answer the Reformers after their own fashion." (P. 210.)

† "Würdig, treffend und für jene Zeiten von seltener Ausbildung." (P. 103.)

‡ No translation into English appeared until 1551, when Ralph Robinson published his delightful version.

about the gravest public problems. I say "in some sort"; for, in truth, it reveals More's mind to us "as through a glass, darkly" (*per speculum et in ænigmate*). "He hovers," says Dr. Brewer, "so perpetually on the confines of jest and earnest, passes so naturally from the one to the other, that the reader is in constant suspense whether his jest is seriousness, or his seriousness is jest." And so More tells us of himself that he used to look sadly when he meant merrily, and that people often thought him to be speaking in sport when he was really in earnest.* The true view of the *Utopia* has been admirably stated by Sir James Mackintosh: "It intimates a variety of doctrines and exhibits a multiplicity of projects which the writer regards with almost every possible degree of approbation and assent, from the frontiers of seriousness and entire belief, through gradations of descending plausibility, where the lowest are scarcely more than exercises of ingenuity, and to which some wild paradoxes are appended, either as a vehicle, or as an easy means (if necessary) of disowning the serious intention of the whole of the Platonic fiction."†

All this should be borne in mind when we peruse More's beautiful idyll. It has, unfortunately, been lost sight of by many gifted persons. Thus, Mr. William Morris found in the *Utopia* his own Socialism, deformed, however, by the

* *English Works*, p. 127. † P. 61.

institution of marriage—a remnant, as he deemed, of medieval superstition. But the Communism which reigns in the fortunate island More dreamed of, is really of a very different type from the vain thing imagined by Mr. Morris and his friends. True it is that in Utopia there are no unemployed rich, no class of men and women "fruges consumere nati." There every one has a trade: none sit idle: nay, there is a six hours' day for workmen: yet "there is no lack of all things that be requisite either for the commodity or necessity of life." But true is it also that this happy order is based not upon desire but upon disdain of riches; not upon hatred of poverty, but upon love of it; not upon despoilment of others, but upon despoilment of self. It is a Communism which reproduces, in the realm of More's fantasy, the ideal realized, for a brief time in the nascent Church, when "they had all things in common, and distribution was made to every man as he had need": an ideal never lost when the Church grew into an imperial power, and kings became her nursing fathers and their queens her nursing mothers; no, never lost, but embraced in every generation by elect souls who saw in it a condition of perfection, and who forsook all to follow more closely the Great Exemplar of voluntary poverty.

Again, Mr. Seebohm, like Bishop Burnet* before him, is grotesquely in error in supposing

* See some very judicious remarks of Rudhardt, pp. 155–6.

that the religion of the Utopians—a religion with no dogmas save those of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, a religion without sacrifice, a religion in which marriage is as easily dissoluble as among the followers of Luther—was really the religion of More himself: More, ever the devout son of the Catholic Church, the unflinching champion of her most distinctive doctrines and practices, and the martyr for the jurisdiction of her Supreme Pontiff.

Once more. Bishop Creighton, the moderation and equity of whose judgments were usually as conspicuous as the breadth and soundness of his learning, is certainly unfair * in his comments on the contrast between More's plea for toleration in the *Utopia*, and the apology for intolerance put forward by More when Chancellor. King Utopus "gave to every man free liberty and choice to believe what he would." Even those who held the most noxious opinions were put to no punishment, because the Utopians "be persuaded that it is in no man's power to believe what he list." So More

* See his *Hulsean Lectures on Persecution and Tolerance*, pp. 104–9. I may point out another error into which this distinguished prelate fell concerning More. He speaks of him as "a man who had the courage to lay down his life on behalf of his opinions when his personal honour was at stake." It is quite clear from More's own words, quoted by me at p. 356, that what he believed to be at stake was not his personal honour, but the salvation of his soul—which is not quite the same thing.

the philosopher, says the Bishop; and now hear More the Chancellor, addressing himself to the confutation of Tindal, and declaring, "It appertaineth to my part and duty to follow the example of his noble Grace; and after my poor wit and learning with opening to his people the malice and poison of those pernicious books, to help as much as in me is, that his people abandoning the contagion of all such pestilent writing, may be free from all infection, and thereby from all such punishment as following thereupon, doth oftentimes rather serve to make others beware that are yet clean, than to cure and heal well those that are already affected: so hard is that carbuncle, catching once a core, to be well and surely cured. Howbeit, God so worketh: and sometimes it is. Towards the help whereof, or if it haply be incurable, then to the clean cutting out of that part from infection of the remnant, am I, by mine office, right especially bounden." More is to Bishop Creighton "a type of that pseudo-liberalism which obscures and confuses every question which it touches." He is "one of those who asserted liberty of thought as a speculative right, [but] showed little capacity for acting on their principles." He "deceived himself," the Bishop writes, "with the belief that he was saving society by putting his principles aside, . . . following the example of the King's noble Grace till the King was ready to apply to him the same measure of justice as himself had applied to others."

Surely the sufficient answer is, that More's lot was cast, not in Utopia, where a philosophical Deism prevailed, but in sixteenth-century England, where the Catholic religion was the very foundation of civil society, where theological unity was the very keystone of the public order. The polity in which More held the highest judicial office was of the kind described by Jeremy Taylor: "The commonwealth is made a Church: the law of the nation made a part of the religion: Christ is made King, and the temporal power is His substitute. But if we say, like the people in the Gospel, 'Nolumus hunc regnare,' then God has armed the temporal power with a sword to cut us off." * When More wrote the *Utopia* in 1516, Luther had not begun his innovations, but was still protesting—and undoubtedly in good faith—his loyalty to the Catholic Church and the Supreme Pontiff. When More wrote his *Confutation of Tindal* in 1532, the very framework of civil society in half Germany had been well-nigh wrecked by religious revolutionists, seeking to force their new opinions upon the rest of the community. † How was it possible for More, the statesman, to advocate toleration of

* *Life of Christ*, Pref.

† He writes in his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*: "Of all the heretics that ever sprang in Christ's Church, the very worst and the most beastly be these Lutherans, as their opinions and their lewd living showeth. . . . They surely trust to bring about, and to frame this realm after the fashion of Switzerland or Saxony, or some other parts of Germany,

sectaries, who sought violently to subvert the existing religion with which the civil order was so strictly united? Or for More, the magistrate, to ignore the provisions of the laws he had sworn to administer, for the maintenance of that religion? The Bishop's observation that More followed "the example of the King's noble Grace till the King was ready to apply to him the same measure of justice as himself had applied to others," is doubtless a rhetorically effective conclusion of a paragraph. But I must take leave to say that it is quite unworthy of the learned and large-minded prelate who indited it. More, in dealing with cases of

where their sect hath already foredone the faith, pulled down the churches, polluted the temples, put out and despoiled all good religious folk, joined friars and nuns together in lechery, despited all saints, blasphemed our Blessed Lady, cast down Christ's Cross, thrown out the Blessed Sacrament, refused all good laws, abhorred all good governance, rebelled against all rulers, fallen to fight among themselves, and so many thousand slain, that the land lieth in many places in manner desert and desolate. And finally, that most abominable is of all, of all their own ungracious deeds they lay the fault on God, taking away the liberty of man's will, ascribing all our deeds to destiny, . . . laying their sin to God's ordinance and their punishment to God's cruelty; and, finally, turning the nature of man into worse than a beast, and the goodness of God into worse than a devil. And all this good fruit would a few mischievous persons—some for desire of a large liberty to an unbridled lewdness, and some of a high devilish pride, cloaked under pretence of good zeal and simpleness—undoubtedly bring into this realm, if the prince and prelates and the good faithful people did not in the beginning meet with their malice." (*English Works*, p. 284.)

heresy as Chancellor, was most scrupulous not only to keep within the law, but in all possible ways to mitigate its severity.* His judicial murder has been described by a high legal functionary—Lord Campbell—as "the blackest crime that ever has been perpetrated in England under the name of law." How can it be seriously maintained that "the same measure of justice" was applied to More, "as himself had applied to others"?

But let us return, for a moment, to the *Utopia*. Nisard has described it, accurately enough, as "the *jeu d'esprit* of a scholar rather than the declaration of principles of a reformer. More had, however, a serious purpose in writing the *Utopia*, although he

* Erasmus (Ep. MDCCCXI.) speaks of More's "singular clemency" in dealing with heretics. But the testimony of More himself, in the thirty-sixth chapter of his *Apology*, is conclusive: "Of all that ever came in my hand for heresy, as help me God, save as I said, the sure keeping of them, had never any one of them any stripe or stroke given them, so much as a fillip on the forehead." (*English Works*, p. 901.) More, if any man, may be believed on his bare word. But as Sir James Mackintosh writes: "This statement, so easily contradicted if in any part false, was made public after his fall from power, when he was surrounded by enemies and could have no friends but the generous. . . . Defenceless and obnoxious as More was then, no man was hardy enough to dispute his truth. Foxe was the first who, thirty years afterwards, ventured to oppose it in a vague statement which we know to be, in some respects, inaccurate; and on this slender authority alone has rested an imputation on the veracity of the most sincere of men." (*Life*, pp. 101–5.)

chose, characteristically enough, to mask that purpose under a veil of humour. The book is, indeed, no declaration of principles; but it is an indictment of the state of society in which More found himself, and an aspiration after a fairer and juster ordering of the commonwealth. Nay, surely, we can trace in it, as we generally may in the works of genius, something vaticinatory; some forecast of "the prophetic soul of the great world, dreaming on things to come." Rudhart finds it underlain by three great truths: that toleration should prevail in matters of religious belief; that all political power should be vested in a single hand; that the well-being of the body politic depends upon the ethical and religious fitness (*Tüchtigkeit*) of its members. The first two of these truths we may reckon—it must be hoped—among the secure conquests of the modern mind. The third, perhaps, is, as yet, by no means generally apprehended. Nay, is there not a tendency, and more than a tendency, in this age, to ignore those spiritual and moral forces which are the true factors of virility and the real sources of national greatness?—to seek that necessity which determines the course of national history, not in national character, but in merely external causes, in mechanical force, in occult destiny? Is it not very generally forgotten or denied, that education, properly considered, is not the mere sharpening of the wits, nor "the acquisition of saleable know-

ledge," but a high, stern, ethical discipline; its primary function, in the august words of Milton, "to teach the people faith, not without virtue, temperance, sobriety, modesty, justice"—the only way in which, as he clearly discerned, it is possible "to make the people the fittest to choose and the chosen fittest to govern"?

Such are some of the thoughts suggested to me as I turn over the pages of the *Utopia*,—"that charming and faithful reflection of More's mind in the years when it was most free, most impartial, most open to ideas of every kind, even to such as harmonize least with the religious exaltation of his first youth, and the dogmatic bitterness of the closing years of his life." * But, however acted on by the circumstances of the age, from first to last, as Rudhart has well observed, More's character is all of a piece. "Because right is right, to follow right" was, from first to last, the principle which ruled his life. The all-encroaching, all-absorbing despotism of Henry VIII. corrupted not only the King himself, but his ministers, his courtiers, his Parliaments, the nation at large. "He turned the theory of kingship into action: 'The King can do no wrong'; therefore men shall call right all that he does." † "'What is truth?" said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." What has truth to do with it? was the

* *Nisard* Vol. I., p. 46.

† Stubbs, *Lectures on Medieval and Modern History*, p. 246.

thought, expressed or not, of the men who cowered before Henry VIII., when the royal will was declared. The King's volition was their one rule of faith and action. But More "would not make his reason blind." To him may be applied, in fullest measure, the eulogy of the Roman poet :—

"sub principe duro,
Temporibusque malis, ausus es esse bonus."

It was no ordinary daring. It was no ordinary manifestation of the triumph of those ideal forces, which I spoke of at the beginning of this chapter, over material forces; of right over might, of justice over fact. It was no ordinary vindication of the freedom of the rational will to follow its transcendental law. Nor is it easy to overestimate the value of one single life like More's. Duty, self-devotion, sacrifice—the things written upon every page of it—what is the explanation of them? They are inexplicable apart from the supersensuous, the divine and the eternal. The great heroes of conscience—of all the heroes the greatest—are, indeed, in Cicero's words, "lumina quædam probitatis et veritatis": "the light of the world," as a greater than Cicero has said, putting visibly before the multitude excellences which else had

"Seemed like a dream of the heart,
Seemed but a cry of desire."

"These are they who are ordained, in God's providence, to be the salt of the earth; to continue,

in their line, the succession of His witnesses, though death sweep away each successive generation of them to their rest and their reward. These communicate the light to a number of lesser luminaries, by whom, in its turn, it is distributed through the world. . . . And thus, the self-same fire, once kindled on Moriah, though seeming at intervals to fail, has at length reached us in safety, and will in like manner, as we trust, be carried forward, even to the end." *

* J. H. Newman's *Oxford University Sermons*, pp. 195–7.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESULTS OF THE RENAISSANCE.

I.

Unless I have altogether failed in the task which I have attempted, the reader who has carefully perused the last five chapters will have realized the vastness, and complexity, and diversity of operation, characterizing the great movement which we call the Renaissance. The familar lines of the Latin poet—

> "Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere, cadentque
> Quæ nunc sunt in honore,"

felicitously apply to it. The Renaissance was the rebirth of many things, and the fall of many things. We owe to it that re-awakened interest in the sources of our moral and intellectual life which has so vastly enlarged our mental horizon; we owe to it a true appreciation of the continuity of Western civilization. We owe to it the fall of scholasticism, of feudalism—and of the religious unity of Europe. It was the resurrection not

merely of the classical spirit, for good and for evil: it was also the resurrection of Christian antiquity: an appeal from the degenerate disciples of Aquinas and Scotus to Christ and His Apostles, to the Martyrs and Doctors of the primitive Church. In a sense, too, we may date from it the rebirth of the natural sciences. The pioneers of physical research and inventions were impelled to their work by classical studies.* Peurback, Cusanus, Copernicus, were all constant readers, and, so to speak, elaborators of their Greek predecessors. Of course, in this department of intellectual activity, as in textual scholarship, the period with which the last five chapters have been concerned was the dawn of an ampler day. But, unquestionably, the great discoveries, terrestrial and celestial, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gave an enormous impetus to the scientific spirit. In the seventeenth, cosmology, chemistry, and physiology took definite rank as branches of human knowledge. The eighteenth century witnessed their enormous development. True it is, indeed, that here, as elsewhere, the Renaissance was the inheritor of the Middle Ages. No one can question

* Paulsen observes: "Im Humanismus stellt sich das Drängen des modernen Geistes nach einer ihm gemässen Ersheinungsform dar. Der Lebenstrieb der abendländischen Völker . . . fand in der naturalistischen Bildung des vorchristlichen Altertums seine Lebensempfindung und Weltanschauung ausgedrückt." (*Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts*, &c., vol. i. p. 168.)

that Roger Bacon, the Franciscan friar of the thirteenth century, was "the pioneer of modern discovery."* The stream of physical knowledge flows on persistently through the centuries, and, however it is impeded at times, its course broadens. In spite of apparent checks and disasters, man's dominion over matter and its forces is ever extending; his advance in the industrial arts of life is really continuous. The human intellect is so constituted that, by a sort of necessity, one discovery, one invention begets another.

II.

But I must not here pursue that topic. This last chapter is concerned with the Results of the Renaissance. And, going back to the first chapter, most of what was quoted there, from panegyrists of the movement, must be allowed. The Renaissance was, no doubt, "a general stimulus and enlightening of the human mind," as Pater says. It was, as Freeman claims, "an age when the spirit of man cast away trammels by which it had long been fettered, when men opened their eyes to light against which they had been closed for ages." We may even admit, in a sense, Michelet's rhetoric, "l'homme s'est retrouvé lui-même": and we may,

* See Dr. Brewer's Preface to *Fr. Rogeri Bacon Opera quædam hactenus inedita.*

without qualification, accept Gregorovius's account of it as "the first great act of that immense moral transformation in which Europe was involved." But when Symonds qualifies it as "liberating the conscience in religion," and "establishing the principle of political freedom," we must demur. I am far from denying—on the contrary, I have maintained in writing of Reuchlin and Luther—that there were principles latent in the Renaissance which, by virtue of the irresistible might inherent in them, have, in the far-off event, contributed to "progress in the direction of organised and assured freedom": a progress which—as I have intimated in an earlier page—I agree with Lord Acton in considering "the characteristic fact of modern history, and its tribute to the theory of Providence." But civil and religious liberty cannot be accounted among the characteristics of the well-nigh three centuries intervening between the culminating period of the Renaissance and its close at the French Revolution. The liberation of the conscience in religion, and the establishment of the principle of political freedom, were not among the direct results of that movement. This it may be worth while briefly to show.

First, then, as to the liberation of the conscience in religion. I have shown in the fifth chapter, that the ecclesiastical revolution, initiated in Germany, was far from promoting the spiritual freedom of the individual. With the single exception of

Erasmus—here, as in other matters, the precursor of the modern spirit—no one of his time seems to have had the least feeling in favour of what we call toleration. It was as remote from the mind of Luther as from the mind of any Dominican Inquisitor. And we must say the same of Luther's disciples, whatever the varieties of their dogma: of Calvin and Zwingli, of Cranmer and Latimer, and the rest. Only within the last century has toleration established itself as a political principle. It is the fruit of the conviction that in an age of religious disunity "the State is incompetent in the matter of cults." The phrase "Church and State" expressed the belief dominant throughout Europe until the French Revolution; and religious conformity, more or less rigidly enforced, was the offspring of that union. The effect of the Lutheran Revolution in the countries where it entered was merely to substitute new Churches for the old one: Churches which claimed, as a matter of course, to impose their creeds upon mankind. Liberty for Protestant revolutionists meant, as subsequently for Jacobin revolutionists, liberty to enforce their opinions and to crush or humiliate their opponents'. And they did so throughout Europe till the end of the last century. It is perfectly true that the Lutheran theory of private judgment involves the absolute independence of the individual to decide for himself in religion: his emancipation from all deference for the opinions of others: his right to

disregard all motives and arguments, the force of which he does not himself appreciate. But it is quite certain that throughout Protestant Europe this theory was never put in practice from the days of Luther to the days of Kant. In his *Streit der Facultäten*, Kant rightly represents the Lutheran divines as saying, in effect, "Draw your conclusions from the source itself—the Bible—whence you may derive them pure and uncontaminated; but take care that you do not discover anything in the Bible except what *we* find there."

"What *we* find there." But, in truth, it would have been more correct if Kant had said, "what the civil power allows us to find there," as, indeed, that philosopher had reason to know from his own experience. The practical effect of the Lutheran revolution was—this has been pointed out in the fifth chapter—to substitute the prince for the Pope as supreme arbiter in questions of faith. The change certainly was not a liberation of the conscience in religion. As certainly it resulted from a development of the idea of the State which the men of the Renaissance derived from the antique world. There, the separation between temporal and spiritual authority did not exist. It was the work of the Catholic Church, when preaching Christianity to the world, to insist upon that separation: to enfranchise religion from secular chains: to destroy the domination of Cæsar over the things of God. "The separation

of temporal and spiritual," writes Mill, "is founded on the idea that material force has no right, no hold over the mind, over conviction, over truth. Enormous as have been the sins of the Catholic Church in the way of religious intolerance, her assertion of this principle has done more for human freedom than all the fires she ever kindled have done to destroy it." *

But this principle the Renaissance put aside. It introduced anew into Europe the Cæsarism of the antique world. That may truly be called its political idea. And before the sixteenth century had closed, the idea was realised throughout the whole of Europe. Everywhere all power is gathered up in the person of the prince: all liberties crumble away before his prerogative; even the spiritual order, the last surviving check, in Catholic countries, upon his domination, is either openly degraded, or secretly debased into an instrument of his authority. There was a reversal of the relations which had generally existed in the Middle Ages between the civil and the spiritual power. Then, the Catholic Church might, with truth, have applied to herself the words, "By me kings reign and princes decree righteousness." Now, it was on the sufferance of kings that she existed: through the decrees of princes that she was permitted, in any degree, to fulfil her mission. Instead of the State depending upon religious sanctions, the Church

* *Discussions and Dissertations*, vol. ii. p. 243.

depended upon political, and, as in Spain, ecclesiastical institutions became the chosen engines of despotism. Everywhere the ties which bound Catholic countries to Rome were more and more loosened. The Holy See was no longer, as in earlier times, a check on regal tyranny.

But further. At the beginning of the seventeenth century a doctrine was promulgated which contributed vastly to rivet monarchical absolutism: the doctrine of the immediate Divine right of kings, originated, apparently, in England, but speedily adopted throughout Europe. It must not be confounded with the theory of the power of the Head of the Holy Roman Empire, set forth by the legists of Bologna in the time of Frederick Barbarossa, for which Dante endeavoured to provide a philosophical basis in his *De Monarchia*. That theory is essentially different from the seventeenth century doctrine of immediate Divine right, though doubtless containing the germ of it. The effect of this new teaching was to impress the seal of religion upon the worst of the political systems of Paganism. Its operation is best exhibited, perhaps, by Louis XIV., under whom the French Monarchy was converted from a great hereditary magistracy to a theocratic institution: while its complementary tenet of passive obedience, carried the royal authority to a pitch of which the ancient Cæsars had never dreamed. It may be truly said of Louis XIV.'s reign—

"State policy and Church policy are conjoint,
But Janus faces, looking different ways."

Never was there a bitterer irony than that by which the Four Articles adopted by an Assembly of the French Clergy in 1682 were termed "The Gallican Liberties." They were the fetters whereby the Church was enslaved to the monarch's all-embracing, all-absorbing despotism. They were the death blow to the last vestige of independence which remained in France: and Innocent XI. was strictly accurate when he called the action of the French bishops who supported them "an abandonment of the sacred cause of the liberties of the Church." The atrocious measure by which they were soon followed was a further manifestation of the same spirit. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was an act of Oriental despotism by a monarch who could not endure that his subjects should profess any creed but his, who judged uniformity in religion the necessary complement of the administrative unity of his kingdom, and who claimed to dispose, at his pleasure, of his slaves' souls as of their bodies.

And if we come to the eighteenth century, we find the same political idea steadily carried out. All the constituents of political freedom—all the elements of healthy national life—were dead in France. The nobility, sunk into the titled lacqueys of the monarch, crowded the ante-chambers of Versailles, strangers to all ambition

beyond that involved in the greed of place or pension, consuming their energies in barren quarrels among themselves, fawning upon the King and the King's favourites, insolent to the rest of the world. The clergy had still the semblance of an independent order. But it was only the semblance. Bound hand and foot by the fetters of the Gallican Liberties, they had become merely a department of the royal service, and their Assemblies were regulated by the court through courtier bishops. The Parliaments alone prevented the power of the monarch from attaining the proportions of Turkish or Muscovite despotism. But the check which they imposed upon it was of fitful and ineffectual operation. It was, indeed, the legists themselves who had sustained the doctrine that the monarch was "the sole and perpetual representative of the nation," while the fashionable theology averred that he was the immediate and special delegate of God himself. In 1770, a few years before his death, Louis XV., when bringing, as he fondly hoped, his protracted dispute with the Parliament of Paris to a close, by an act so high-handed that his grandfather at the summit of his power would have shrunk from it, could assert: "Nous ne tenons notre couronne que de Dieu: le droit de faire les lois par lesquelles nos sujets doivent être conduits et gouvernés nous appartient, à nous seuls, sans dépendance et sans partage." It is curious to reflect that little more

than a hundred years ago we find a French Sovereign employing such language unchallenged: language almost identical with that which in the fourteenth century cost our Richard II. so dear.

The political progress of most Continental countries, during the eighteenth century, was in lines parallel to that of France. The age was, as it is often called, "le siècle Français." The same theories were everywhere in possession, were officially recognized, and were practically carried out. Shorn as the French monarchy was of much of the prestige which had attached to it in the palmy days of Louis XIV., its magnificence was still very dazzling, and very attractive to the other Continental monarchs: it was the type to what they sought to approximate. During the whole of the reign of Louis XV., the advance of absolutism throughout Europe, in the machinery and outward expression of government, was unchecked. In the two great Catholic States especially, Austria and Spain, the notion of immediate Divine right, which had become the main idea of the French polity, was asserted with a baldness — we may say, an impudence — very difficult, in these days, properly to realize. The monarchs were as demi-gods; and the bare mention of the liberty of the subject was shuddered at, as a kind of sacrilege. The tendency everywhere was to concentrate all authority in the hands of the prince, and so—inherent vice of despotism!—to

leave the throne without any sort of equipoise. Sweden, which in 1720 had recovered its ancient constitution, set aside in the previous century for unlimited monarchy, fell in 1772 under the despotism of Gustavus, to whom France had supplied money wherewith to effect this revolution. Three years before Struensee had introduced into Denmark a similar change, which was destined to survive the brief authority of its author. Some remarkable words were addressed by the Doge Renier, in 1762, to the Venetian Senate, warning them of the danger which threatened them, through the hatred of monarchs for institutions which to any extent savoured of freedom. All the Sovereigns of Europe, he urged, were watching the Republics, ready for aggression. Perhaps the foulest depth of despotism was reached in Germany, in the States of some three dozen petty little potentates, veritable Satyrs and Sileni, who regarded and treated the peasant and burgher classes as mere beasts of burden, and sold them like horses for foreign military service. Such are the most salient points in the condition of Europe as the eighteenth century draws to its close. Happily, the picture is not wholly unrelieved. In the Swiss mountains the traditions of liberty still survived. Holland and the Netherlands preserved their hard-won immunities: the Tyrolese retained their local privileges: the Hungarians lived as freemen under the laws of St. Stephen;

in the States of the Church * municipal self-government prevailed to an extent to which the Italy of the present day is a stranger. In England the New Monarchy had been cast out at the Revolution—rightly termed Glorious—of 1688: a Parliamentary title to the throne had been substituted for a hereditary title, and freedom had broadened down "from precedent to precedent." But these beams of liberty only serve to render more visible the darkness of the house of bondage in which the rest of the European peoples languished.

III.

We may safely say, then, that we cannot reckon among the results of the Renaissance—the direct results, for with such are we here concerned—the liberation of the conscience in religion, or the establishment of the principle of political freedom. Its effect, on the contrary, was to

> "induce a time,
> Where single thought is civil crime,
> And individual freedom mute:"

a time which lasted, throughout the greater part

* Burke, in his "Third Letter on a Regicide Peace" (*Works*, vol. v. p. 367), passes a glowing eulogium upon Pius VI., and not without reason expresses particular admiration of the "free, fertile, and happy city and state of Bologna." Local self-government in the Pontifical States, resulting, as it did, from historical events, differed widely in the several provinces, but, upon the whole, it was very considerable.

of Europe, for nearly three centuries. But, possibly, that very discipline of absolutism was necessary for the realization of an ampler state of liberty; just as the ascetic discipline of the Middle Ages may have been the necessary precursor of the wider culture of the Renaissance. It is a fine saying of Herder's, that man comes into the world to learn reason (*Vernunft*). And he adds, "Theoretically and practically, reason is nothing else than something acquired, a proportion and direction of ideas and faculties which we must learn, and to which man, according to his organization and way of life, must be educated." * The career of the human race, as of the individuals composing it, is a long process of education. The details of that process, so far as we can apprehend them, often seem to the most open-minded historians, passing strange, and unsatisfactory to the logical understanding. Still they must believe that

> "In the unreasoning progress of the world,
> A wiser spirit is at work for us,
> A better eye than their's."

Without that belief, history would be a mere tale of sound and fury signifying nothing, and the only possible creed of those who study it, the darkest pessimism.

* The words occur in Chap. iv. of the Fourth Book of the *Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit*, Part I. I may note that the chapter is headed "Der Mensch ist zur feinern Trieben, mithin zur Freiheit organisiret." *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. iv. p. 168 (ed. 1827).

INDEX.

Absolutism,
in eighteenth century Europe, 389
Act of Supremacy, 348, 360
Acton, Lord,
on the dogma of impartiality, 33
on the characteristic fact of modern history, 301
Adagia,
Erasmus's, 123
Adrian VI., Pope,
a schoolfellow of Erasmus, 113
urges Erasmus to write against Luther, 159
on the corruption of the Church, 283
his high character, 287
Ægidius of Viterbo, Cardinal,
desires a reform in the Church, 134
on indulgences, 151
Albert of Brandenburg, Archbishop of Maintz,
his career, 256
a spiritual speculation of, 257
thought well of by Erasmus, 258
Luther's letter to concerning Tetzel's preaching, 261
his letter to the Pope (July, 1521), 277
Aleander, Cardinal, 132, 158, 275, 290, 303
Amiel, Émile,
His *Un Libre Penseur du XVIme Siècle*, quoted or referred to, 106, 113, 123, 150
Anabaptists, the,
Erasmus on, 163
Aristotle,
Luther's abuse of, 294
Art,
early medieval, 13
development of in Italy, 13–14, 30
Art—*contd.*
aim of, 37–39
Alfred de Musset on, 39
how conceived of by the great Italian masters, 47
high, education required to understand, 83
Augustine, St.,
on the chief lessons of Christianity, 12
on the ascent from created to uncreated beauty, 90
his obligations to Platonism, 102
his literary influence, 103
a pregnant dictum of, 306
his doctrine of justification, 299
ἀrapaξία,
the right ideal in history, 35

Bacci,
his *Vita de San Filippo Neri*, quoted or referred to, 98, 241
Bacon, Roger,
the pioneer of modern discovery, 381
Beard, Dr. Charles,
his *Martin Luther and the Reformation in Germany*, quoted or referred to, 232, 238, 241, 243, 247, 253, 262, 270, 271, 306
his *Hibbert Lectures*, quoted, 304
Boccaccio, 17
Boleyn, Anne, 330, 337, 338, 339, 340, 349, 350, 351, 357, 365
Boleyn, Lady, 339, 359
Boleyn, Mary, 338–9
Brewer, Professor,
on indulgences, 285
on the Act of Supremacy, 318, 360
on Henry VIII.'s absolutism, 343
on *The Utopia*, 368

Bridgett, Father,
his *Life of Sir Thomas More*, quoted or referred to, 313, 314, 334, 341
his *Life of Blessed John Fisher*, quoted, 345

Cabbalah, the,
Reuchlin's studies in, 186, 213, 221–224
Campbell, Lord,
on Sir Thomas More's judicial murder, 374
Carlyle,
on Luther's burning the Bull *Exsurge Domine*, 275
on Luther's diction, 292
his doctrine of history, 310
Christianity,
what it is, 10
Chronology,
difficulties of, 4
Cicero,
on the good man, 240
on great men, 29, 377
Classics, the ancient,
an incomparable instrument of the higher education, 171
Clement VI., Pope, 16
Clement VII., Pope,
and Michael Angelo, 67, 69
protects Erasmus, 167
his tortuous policy in the matter of Henry VIII.'s matrimonial cause, 344
his definitive sentence in that cause, 350
Colet,
More's confessor, 326
Colloquies, the,
of Erasmus, 161
Columbus,
and the Renaissance, 1
Condivi,
his *Vita di Michelagnolo*, quoted or referred to, 41, 44, 45, 49, 60, 61, 64, 74, 78, 81, 90, 99
Constance, the Council of,
and Humanism, 19
Constantinople,
the Fall of, 3, 20
Copernicus,
and the Renaissance, 1, 380
Cranmer,
his Protestantising work for the Church of England, 298
his "honesty," 343
Cranmer—*contd.*
figure presented by him as a judge, 349
his effort to save More, 356
Creighton, Bishop,
his *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, quoted or referred to, 139, 153, 154, 176, 211, 225, 232, 268, 269, 278, 290
his *Wolsey* quoted, 345
unfairness of his criticism of Sir Thomas More, 370–374
Cusanus,
and the Renaissance, 380

Dante,
Paganism in, 9
his influence on Michael Angelo, 51, 62, 85, 101
Death,
Michael Angelo on, 92
Determinism in history, 310
Deutsche Theologie, the
its effect on Luther, 246
Dies Iræ,
the, 85
Duppa,
on Michael Angelo's unphilosophical notions, 84
Durand de Laur,
his *Érasme Précurseur et Initiateur de l'esprit moderne*, quoted or referred to, 106, 121

Eberhard the Bearded, Duke, 182–186
Eck, John, 218, 268
Ehrenberg,
his *Das Zeitalter der Fugger* referred to, 257
Epigrams,
mordant of the Renaissance, 25, 287
Enchiridion Militis Christiani, 124, 126
Epistolæ Clarorum, Virorum ad Joh. Reuchlin, 208
Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum, 205–213
Epochs in European History, 4
Erasmus,
the type of the Renaissance Man of Letters, 103
importance of the part played by, in his day, 104
recent literature on, 105–109
on England, 121

Erasmus—*contd.*
account of his career, 110–169
his controversy with Luther on free will, 152–160, 280
debt of the modern world to, 169–174
on Pfefferkorn, 206
disapproves of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, 212
his fine letters to Reuchlin and Hochstraten, 213
his Colloquy on the Apotheosis of Reuchlin, 219
on indulgences, 254, 285
on Luther, 271, 288, 289, 295, 307
on More, 324, 325, 326–7, 332–4
"Evangelical" Protestantism
Luther's creation, 299

Feugère,
his *Érasme, Étude sur sa Vie et ses Ouvrages*, quoted or referred to, 105, 124, 161, 165
Florence, the,
of Michael Angelo's youth, 44
Foxe,
his slander of Sir Thomas More, 374
Franck,
his treatise *La Kabbale* referred to, 222
Freeman,
on the Renaissance, 3
on the degradation of the Papacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 19
Free will,
and Ethics, 173, 302
Froude, A. J.,
merits and defects of his historical works, 107–109, 318
casual specimens of his errors, 111, 124, 126, 128, 129, 135, 141, 142, 143, 146, 156, 157, 158, 165, 177, 334, 363
Fuggers, the,
their bargain with Archbishop Albert of Maintz, 257

Geary, Sir William Nevill,
his *Law of Marriage and Family Relations* referred to, 341
Geiger,
his *Johann Reuchlin sein Leben und seine Werke*, quoted or referred to, 173–227, *passim*
Ghirlandaio, Domenico,
his artistic merits, 46–7
Gianotti,
his *Dialogue* quoted, 92
Ginsburg,
his *The Kabbalah* referred to, 224
Giotto,
the school founded by, 13
Goethe,
on Reuchlin, 220
on one effect of Luther's revolution, 307
on our debt to Luther, 308
"Gospel, The,"
what Luther meant by, 298
"Great Man Theory," the, 310
Gregorovius,
on the Renaissance, 3, 382
Grimani, Cardinal, 134, 135, 138, 151, 206
Grimm,
merits and demerits of his *Leben Michelangelo's*, 41, 74, 78, 94, 97
Gualandi,
letter attributed to Michael Angelo in his *Lettere Artistiche*, 45
Guasti, Signor,
his edition of Michael Angelo's sonnets, 40, 89
on Michael Angelo and the Piagnoni, 56
on the stainlessness of Michael Angelo's youth, 64
on the arguments of Michael Angelo's poetry, 90
on Michael Angelo's Platonism, 92

Hallam,
accuses Luther of Antinomianism, 305
Hare, Archdeacon,
his vindication of Luther, 305
Harford,
his *Life of Michael Angelo*, quoted or referred to, 50, 98
Harpsfield,
his MS. *Life of Sir Thomas More*, quoted, 359
Heath Wilson,
his *Life and Letters of Michael Angelo*, quoted or referred to, 46, 49, 60, 61, 66, 71, 75, 97, 99
Heine,
on early medieval art, 13

Heine—*contd.*
on Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century, 27
on the medieval Jews, 189
Henry VII.,
his despotism, 317
his displeasure with Sir Thomas More, 327
his good and bad qualities, 328
Henry VIII.
and Erasmus, 135–6
what the Act of Supremacy did for him, 318
his accession, 328
his accomplishments, *Ibid.*
his nuptials with Katharine of Aragon, *Ibid.*
takes More into his service, 332
his favour to More, 335–337
his overmastering passion for Anne Boleyn, 337
his conscience, 338, 340
cannot be regarded as an abnormally dissolute King, 338
his love letters, 340
seeks to win the support of More to his divorce, 341
regards himself as a sort of vice-deity, 343
his conception of honesty, *Ibid.*
his early exaltation of the Papacy, 344
his obstinacy and unscrupulousness, 345
his persecution of More, 352–3, 358
rejects Cranmer's device for saving More, 356
his final breach with the Holy See, 360
his reception of the news of More's execution, 365
corrupting effect of his despotism, 376–7
Herder,
on Reuchlin's work, 229
on man's education in reason, 392
Hettner,
on the reform desired by Savonarola, 52
Hochstraten,
Jacob von, 196–216
Horawitz,
his collection of Reuchlin's letters, 176
Hutten,
Ulrich von, 209, 216, 225, 290
Hutton, William Holden,
his *Sir Thomas More*, quoted or referred to, 32, 315, 322, 325, 366, 367

Ignatius Loyola St.,
and the Bible, 146
Impartiality,
the dogma of, 34
Indulgences,
Erasmus on, 151, 254, 285, 288
abuses in the preaching of, 248, 253–260
Luther's earliest utterances concerning, 249
Swift's satire of, 249
the Roman theory of, 250–3
scandals in connection with, 253–262
Brewer on, 285
Italian race, the,
lacking in veracity and virility, 31

Janssen,
his *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, referred to or quoted, 232, 248, 276, 282, 286, 292
Jebb, Sir Richard,
his *Rede Lecture* on Erasmus, 107
quoted, 112, 119, 127, 140, 141
Jews,
condition of medieval, 189–191
converted, cost of, 193
Johannes a Lapide, 180
Jortin,
his *Life of Erasmus* quoted, 121, 260
Julius II.,
and Michael Angelo, 66, 73
his triumphal entry into Bologna, 130
dispenses Erasmus from wearing the Augustinian scapulary, 131
second triumph of, 133
Good Friday sermon before, 170

Kant,
on the Biblical Theologian, 308
on the two kingdoms to which man belongs, 311
on the Lutheran divines and the Bible, 384

Kolde,
his *Martin Luther eine Biographie*, quoted or referred to, 232, 236, 241, 245, 246
Köstlin,
his *Martin Luther, sein Leben und seine Schriften*, 231

Landor,
on Clement VI., 16
on Petrarch, *Ibid.*
on the Valdenses, 26
Latin,
in the Middle Ages, 7
Leo X.,
and Michael Angelo, 66
his esteem for Erasmus, 134
tolerance under, 145
and Erasmus's New Testament, 145, 147
Luther on, 155
condemns the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, 212
condemns Reuchlin, 215
promotes the printing of the *Talmud*, 216
his concession of the business of the indulgence (*das heylig negotium*) to Archbishop Albert of Maintz, 257
thought well of by Erasmus, 258
his Bull *Exsurge Domine*, 273
Lessing,
on Luther's work, 308
Lilly,
More's most dear companion, 325, 326
Lorenzo de' Medici,
endeavours to foster Michael Angelo's genius, 48
his Platonism, 49
Louis XIV.,
and the New Monarchy, 386–7
Luther,
proclaims himself Reuchlin's follower, 214
literature concerning, 231–2
parentage, 233
sketch of his career, 234–282
causes which contributed to the success of his revolution, 283–297
its results, 297–308

Mackintosh, Sir James,
his *Life of Sir Thomas More* quoted or referred to, 313, 368, 374
Malermi,
his Italian translation of the Bible, 59
Maximilian, the Emperor,
and the Reuchlin controversy, 194–208 *passim*
Melanchthon,
165, 225, 244, 245, 269, 287, 293, 294
Michael Angelo,
Italian art culminates in, 30
has accomplished the aim of art as no other has, 39
the typical artist of the Renaissance, 39
his life and achievements in the arts of design, 40–88
his sonnets, 88–95
not a crypto-Lutheran, 96–100
did not cling to a dream of Platonising Christianity, 100–102
Michelet,
on Michael Angelo's Sistine frescoes, 77
his account of the Renaissance, 1, 381
on Luther's treatise, *De Servo Arbitrio*, 280
Middle Ages, the,
culminating period of, in Italy, 10
art in, 13
great writers of, 14
physical science in, 380
Mill, John Stuart,
on the work of the Catholic Church for human freedom, 385
Monks,
in the time of Erasmus, 125, 144, 161, 285–6
Monnier,
on Petrarch, 14
on Luther's obligations to Italian Humanists, 32
More, Cressacre,
his *Life of Sir Thomas More*, quoted or referred to, 313, 321, 324, 367
More, Sir John,
320, 321, 327
More, Sir Thomas,
his obligations to Italian Humanists, 32
his sympathy with Reuchlin, 203.

More, Sir Thomas—*contd.*
represents the highest perfection of character among the men of the Renaissance, 309
lives of, 313–316
his career sketched, 316–365
his religion, 343, 346–348, 355, 370
great merits of his English works, 366–7
his *Utopia*, 367–376
his alleged intolerance, 370–374
value of his life, 377–8
Morton, Cardinal,
More's first patron, 320
doubtless inspired More's *History of Richard III.*, 367
Mozley, Dr.,
his *Essay on Luther*, quoted or referred to, 232, 239, 242, 266, 281, 297
Musset, Alfred de,
on art, 39

Napoleon I.,
on a conflict of interests in the Church of Rome, 265
Newman, Cardinal,
his *Lectures on Justification* referred to, 299
Nisard,
his sketch of the times of Erasmus, 110
on the difference between Erasmus and Luther, 172
on Luther's marriage, 281
on the philosophy dominant at the opening sixteenth century, 289
on Luther's personal ascendancy, 293
on Luther and free will, 296
his admiration of Sir Thomas More, 315
on Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More, 333
on More's silence concerning Henry VIII.'s divorce, 342
on the *Utopia*, 376
Nolhac, M. de,
his brochure *Erasme en Italie*, quoted or referred to, 107, 135, 137

Ozanam,
on medieval paganism, 9

Padua,
in the time of Erasmus, 133
Paganism,
in the Middle Ages, 9
the New, 22–25, 27, 53
Papacy, the,
degradation of, in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 19, 54, 287
Pastor,
his view of the Renaissance, 6
on Boccaccio, 17
on the corruption of the Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, *Ibid.*
on the New Paganism, 21
Pater, Walter,
on the Renaissance, 1, 381
his mistakes concerning Michael Angelo, 64, 92
Paul II.,
his severities against certain members of the Roman Academy, 27
Paul III.,
proposes to raise Erasmus to the Cardinalate, 167
Paulsen,
on the great writers of the Middle Ages, 14
on Petrarch, 15
on the ideals of the Italian Humanists, 22
on Humanism and physical science, 380
Peasants' War, the, 160, 278
Petrarch, 14, 16, 18, 21, 22
Peurback,
and the Renaissance, 380
Pfefferkorn, John, 150, 193–216
Physical science,
and the Renaissance, 380
Pico della Mirandola, 32, 43, 184, 185, 186, 198, 221, 329
Platonism,
Michael Angelo's alleged, 50, 100
Poggio, Bracciolini, 6, 23
Pole, Cardinal,
a friend of Michael Angelo, 82
on Sir Thomas More's judicial murder, 362
Praise of Folly, the, 141–145, 254
Prierias, Sylvester,
and the Reuchlin controversy, 208, 215
his *Epitome*, 270

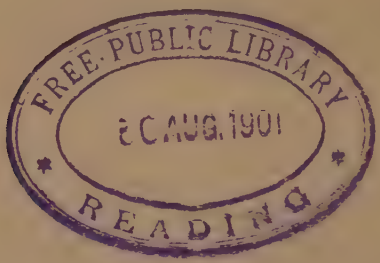
Reade, Charles,
his *The Cloister and the Hearth*, 111
Renaissance, the,
various accounts of, 1–3
culminating period of, 3
epoch of, 5
genesis of, 5–33
Michael Angelo, the Artist of, 37–102
Erasmus, the Man of Letters of, 103–174
Reuchlin, the Savant of, 175–230
Luther, the Revolutionist of, 231–308
More, the Saint of, 309–378
results of, 379–392
Reynolds, Sir Joshua,
on the grand style, 83
on the style of Michael Angelo, 96
Reuchlin,
authorities for his life, 175–7
sketch of his career, 178–219
his life work, 220–230
Richard III.,
his bid for popularity, 317
Rienzi, 16
Romola,
admirable picture of the Florence of the closing fifteenth century in, 44
Roper
his *Life of Sir Thomas More*, referred to or quoted from, 213, 331, 336, 344, 347, 348, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 359, 361, 362, 364, 365
Rudhart,
his *Thomas Morus*, quoted or referred to, 338, 367, 369, 375
Rudimenta Hebraica,
Reuchlin's, 189, 227
Ruskin,
on the difference between the earlier and the later Italian schools of painting, 48
his classification of artists as seekers after truth, 83

Sandar,
his *De Schismate Anglicano*, quoted or referred to, 339, 346, 350
Savonarola,
the spiritual successor of Dante, 52
his mission, 55
Savonarola—*contd.*
his influence on Michael Angelo, 56, 77
Scaliger, Julius Cæsar,
on Petrarch, 14
Schlegel, Frederich von,
on Michael Angelo's Sonnets, 88
Schopenhaur,
On the object of art, 37–39
Seebohm,
a grotesque error of, 369
Sickingen, Franz von, 215
Soderini, Cardinal,
his advice to Leo X., 264
Stapleton,—
his *Life of More*, quoted or referred to, 313, 320, 321, 326, 336
Stapitz, 239, 244
Stubbs, Bishop,
on Henry VIII.'s absolutism, 337, 343, 360, 376
Swift,
his parody of an indulgence letter, 249
Symonds,
his account of the Renaissance, 2, 3, 382
on the corruption of Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century, 24
on Michael Angelo, 41–100 *passim*

Taine,
on an artist's soul, 76
his view of history, 310
Taylor, J. E.,
on Michael Angelo as a philosophic poet, 101
Taylor, Bishop Jeremy,
on the wise old spirits of antiquity, 23
on Church and State, 372
Tetzel, John, 248, 258–260, 262
Toleration, religious
only recently established as a political principle, 383

Valla, Laurentius, 26, 33, 269
Venice,
in the time of Erasmus, 131
Victoria Colonna,
her friendship with Michael Angelo, 65, 81
remark of, on Michael Angelo, 96
not a crypto-Lutheran, 98, 99
Vocabularius Breviloquus,
Reuchlin's, 180

Warham, Archbishop,
his friendship with Erasmus, 129, 140
Wolsey, Cardinal,
attaches More to the royal service, 331, 332
Wolsey, Cardinal—*contd.*
originally suggested to Henry VIII. the scruples concerning his first marriage, 337
Wordsworth,
on Michael Angelo's Sonnets, 89



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